

T H E
ENGLISH PREACHER.

V O L. IX.



T H E
ENGLISH PREACHER:

O R,
S E R M O N S

ON THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS OF
RELIGION AND MORALITY,

SELECTED, REVISED, AND ABRIDGED FROM
VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VOLUME THE NINTH.
CONTAINING OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

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T H E
C O N T E N T S.

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By ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

On Education;

Preached on Aft Sunday.

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S E R M O N I.

ON EDUCATION;

PREACHED ON ACT SUNDAY. 1774?

DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 46, 47.

And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words, which I testify among you this day; which ye shall command your children to observe to do all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you: because it is your life; and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

THESE words contain the last exhortation, which Moses the great founder of the Jewish state, gave his countrymen,
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on the very day wherein he had notice of his approaching death. He had freed them, with infinite danger to himself, from Egyptian tyranny, and the worse bondage of idolatry and superstition: he had received for them, from God's own mouth, such laws of life, as in their circumstances were most conducive to virtue and happiness: these he had delivered to his people, established on the surest foundation of regard; affectionate reverence to the object of all duty, and Author of all good: he had laboured, with infinite patience, through a long course of years, to cultivate in them this important principle of religious obedience: and now, drawing near to the close of a life spent in their service, he recommends it again; first, with all the force of a most persuasive eloquence; and afterwards by every charm, that poetry itself could add; setting happiness and misery before them, in an ode of divine sublimity and spirit, which they are commanded by Heaven to learn themselves, and teach their posterity. This therefore he communicates in a solemn manner to the whole congregation, as the conclusion of all his cares for them;
and

and then takes his final leave in the exhortation of the text, confirming once more at his death the importance of those precepts, which he had been giving them through his whole life. "Set your hearts, &c."

Their own observance of God's law was securing the felicity of one generation only: but educating their children in religion and virtue, this was perpetuating blessings to each part of the society and to the whole: lasting prosperity and peace, in the good land they were going to possess; and in that better country, of which it was an emblem, life for evermore.

The words afford then a just occasion for speaking, of the advantages of right education; and the duty of endeavouring, that these advantages may be obtained.

Other creatures arrive, without their own care, at the small perfection, of which they are capable, and there stop: but the whole of man's existence, that appears, is a state of discipline and progression. Youth is his preparation for maturer years: this whole life, for another to come. Nature gives the abilities

to improve; but the actual improvement, we are to have the pleasure and the reward of giving ourselves and one another. Some minds indeed, as some soils, may be fruitful without cultivation; others, barren with it; but the general necessity is the same in both cases; and in both, the richest, and most capable of producing good fruit, will be over-run, if neglected, with the rankest and worst weeds.

Now the only universal precaution, that can be in this respect, christianity hath furnished, by introducing a stated method of instruction, unknown before; which, joined with the parents private care, is, to the generality of mankind, sufficient for the purposes of intellectual and moral improvement. But to persons of more extensive influence, a more particular and appropriated institution is necessary; for the world's sake as well as their own. This, with regard to the teachers of religion, men almost without exception acknowledge: but too commonly forget it in another case, of no less importance; theirs I mean, whose authority is to enforce the laws of conduct, and whose example is to lead the way in
life.

life. Here sometimes a wrong care, often an imperfect one, is taken by the fondest parents. The outward accomplishments and decencies of behaviour they teach them with great exactness, and do well: but then, without the least further provision, send them abroad into the school of the world, there to learn what they can. The consequence is, what must naturally be expected: trifles and follies, ever readiest at hand, and best suited to the unjudging mind, get first into possession; and, in many, leave place for nothing else to enter. Such, unqualified for the valuable employments of life, must lose their days in the low amusements of a false and effeminate politeness; hoping for no higher a character, than a set of creatures, equally contemptible, can give one another by mutual admiration; and happy after all, if they chance to preserve an innocent worthlessness.

But suppose room left for some attention to knowledge; not even the forms of decent carriage, though obvious things, are fully learnt without regular application: what sort of acquaintance then with science must that be, which is pick-

ed up occasionally and by accident? A thorough one indeed we must judge it, were the first appearance to determine us; that air of sufficiency, with which a person thus educated for the most part delivers his sentiments. But if we examine, as the world will, what is under this appearance to support it; then a mind is discovered, thoughtlessly persuaded of its own knowledge, where it is very ignorant; and affecting knowledge, even though it is conscious of having none: first making hastily whatever determination is fashionable about questions half understood, and not at all considered, be their importance what it will; and then going on immediately to act upon this determination, without the least diffidence, or the least thought what the laws of human actions are: unmoved by reason, and scorning it; but changing frequently on mere fancy, and fluctuating through life without rule or guide, from the forward extravagancies of a profligate youth, to the end of an early and despicable old age.

The benefits of conversation greatly depend on the previous attainments, both of those, who are supposed to communicate

cate knowledge, and to receive it. If therefore instruction be neglected, conversation will grow trifling; if perverted, dangerous. Still acquaintance with the world, however corrupted, may be a useful part of education; but then it must be the last. It gives a beautiful polish: but of this the best prepared mind will be the most susceptible. It teaches many things: but good or bad, according as the learner is qualified to distinguish. He, whom improved good sense hath enabled to observe upon common practice, will extract wisdom and virtue from the vices and follies of mankind. But such as are ignorant, and capable only of imitating, will of course admire the worst of what they see; and be the more effectually ruined, the more they aim to be accomplished. It is therefore a merciless thing, to throw out poor creatures unprincipled in what is right, to shift for themselves where so much wrong is to be learned.

Regular cultivation of the understanding then is what good education begins with. The earliest branch of this, acquaintance with useful languages unlocks the treasures of ancient learning,

and makes the improvements of every age and climate our own. Then the politer parts of literature most agreeably open the faculties, and form the taste of young persons; adorn our discourse and endear our company, in riper years; give a grace to wisdom and virtue; relieve the fatigue of our busy hours, and elegantly fill up the leisure of our vacant ones. At the same time the art of just reasoning opportunely comes in, to curb the licence of imagination, and direct its force; to fix the foundations of science; ascertain the degrees of probability, and unveil specious error. With this guide we proceed securely. Knowledge of nature opens the universe to our view; enables us to judge worthily of the constitution of things; secures us from the weakness of vulgar superstitions; and contributes, in many ways, to the health and security, the convenience and pleasure of human life. If from hence we go on to survey mankind; a contemplation of their different states in different ages, especially of their ancient regulations and laws, the public wisdom of brave and great nations, will furnish variety of useful reflections to the mind;
often

often teaching us to improve our own condition, often to be happy in it.

It must be obvious, how rational an entertainment these things are; and how useful materials they furnish; to ripen and perfect that prudence and good sense which not only carries us through the business of life, but gives relish and stability to the pleasures of it. If then knowledge ought to be attained, the way to it ought to be made easy; by removing difficulties, cautioning against mistakes, and leading forwards in a right method. Above all, application ought to be secured, by the authority of a prudent instructor; and emulation excited, by a number of fellow-learners.

But if education stop here, it hath only given abilities and powers, the direction of which to right or wrong purposes is greatly uncertain still. He that knows not the proper use of his own being; "what is man and whereto serveth he, what is his good and what is his evil;" may easily employ his other knowledge so, as to be much the worse for it. This inquiry then is the important one. Various methods of conducting life present

themselves; contradictory inclinations demand to be gratified: the conflict is painful; the end of it may be more so: which way is right, and which shall we take? Now there is a science, that can direct us here: can shew us an inward principle, endued with native authority to govern all the rest; obedience to which gives a steady aim and self-approbation to our conduct, bestows on us the truest satisfactions of life, and delivers us from its worst evils. Nor are morals only the source of private happiness, but the great foundation of mutual security, the only one of esteem and friendship amongst men. A person of true goodness, though otherwise of small accomplishments, will always make an amiable figure in society, and be a valuable part of it: whereas, without a virtuous heart, the superior abilities of the great man will only render him a more extensive mischief; and the deceitful agreeableness of the gay man qualify him to mislead, betray and ruin, more entirely, those with whom he converses. Thus wherever wickedness increases, will misery increase also; till the end be universal confusion. For though a constitution, sinking under vice, may
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preserve for some time the florid look of health; yet inward strength, and lasting vigour, are what nothing but virtue, public and private, can give to any people. This is that true wisdom, "in whose right hand is length of days; and in her left, riches and honour."

Now the foundations of virtue are indeed laid by nature, both in the reason and affections of mankind: but reason is so often inattentive, and affections are so easily depraved, that without further care, those moral principles, which make the best part of our inward frame, will in most men be greatly obscured, and in some, to all appearance, quite effaced. And, were even those of righter minds left each to form their private system, tenderness for their own failings, or prejudice for those of the world, would often lead them into imperfect notions and wrong practice. One indispensable branch then of liberal education is an accurate institution in this important science: to pull off the disguises which vice affects to wear, and place the consequences of it in a just light; to point out the less obvious advantages of virtue, and shew its restraints to end in

real freedom; to represent the strict connexions of its several parts, and make strong the proof, that "knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom; neither at any time the counsel of sinners prudence."

And when should the science of life be taught, but in the beginning of life; before evil habits are formed: whilst the natural regard to truth and right, the only inward restraint of incautious youth, remains uncorrupt; and the seeds of sin lie yet somewhat loose on the surface of the mind; much harder to be cleared away, when once they have taken root, and twisted themselves strongly about the heart. This therefore is the favourable opportunity, in which authority and reason must exert at once their joint force. For discipline without instruction is mere tyranny: and instruction without discipline, little better than useless talk. Things owned to be fit and good are neglected, because disagreeable; things evidently hurtful pursued for present pleasure. Here authority comes in to the aid of reason; enforces virtuous application; restrains vicious indulgences; tempers the warmth of youth; prepares
us

us for the future subordinations of life ; conducts us safe through the unseen dangers of our most dangerous time ; and then by gentle degrees withdraws its influence, as the power of self-government grows up. Where want of this care leaves young persons too soon in the worst of hands, their own ; it is dreadful to see, into what irretrievable miseries they plunge, in the very beginning of their course. And therefore, the more liberty they are afterwards to enjoy ; the more prudent, though not stricter, restraint they should be under at first ; and entered by slow steps into the world at large, with all possible cautions given them of the hazards they are going upon, and (God knows) have little reason to be eager for.

But the most serious part of education is wanting still : the part which leads us, by the esteem of moral excellence, to honour and love that being, in whom the perfection of it dwells ; and extends our inward sense of duty, suggested first by the low and short-lived relations between us and our fellow-creatures, to the highest possible and eternal object of it, the Creator and Ruler of this universe. He,
by

by whose pleasure we are, from whose favour all that we enjoy and hope for comes, according to whose determination our whole existence shall be happy or miserable, is not surely one with whom we are unconcerned. And, however a base nature may value itself on the impotent affectation of slighting God; every worthy mind will delight to express that veneration, and pay that obedience, which are due to him, who is the Lord of all: due by the strongest claims; whether unassisted reason discover the general laws of his moral kingdom; or infinite wisdom, the best judge of our circumstances, condescend to adapt to them further obligations. It is indeed the sense of our living under his government and care, that makes our condition of being desirable. Religion, filling the mind with that object which it naturally seeks, a sovereign protector, infinitely wise and good, effectually excludes all superstitious terrors; and, far from depressing the tenderest spirit, exalts us into every thought and every hope, that is great and noble. Turbulence of passions, and obstinacy of self-will, these are the things, that tear and weaken the soul: reverence
of

of God, by awing them into compoſure, ſtrengthens every inward principle that ought to be ſtrong; and if it prunes the luxuriances, promotes by ſo doing the vigour of the mind. Religion comprehends at once every motive, both of virtue and of private intereſt, that can either direct or ſupport the heart in every part of conduct; joins in perpetual union our duty and our happineſs; and makes the univerſal ſcheme of things conſiſtent, beautiful and good.

Since therefore inſtruction of youth in religion, virtue, and knowledge, appears attended with ſo many advantages; it follows,

That all perſons concerned in it ſhould endeavour, with united care, in their ſeveral ſtations, that theſe advantages may be effectually obtained; eſpecially in the places dedicated to that purpoſe.

To you, who are parents, nature itſelf hath given a tender concern for your children's welfare, as your own; and reminds you juſtly, that, as you have brought them into the dangers of life, your buſineſs it is to provide, that they get well through them. Now the only proviſion commonly attended to, of wealth
and

and honours, can never produce happiness; unless the mind, on which all depends, be taught to enjoy them properly. Fortune, without this, will but lead them to more abandoned follies of extravagance; and expose them to more public censure. Education then is the great care, with which you are entrusted; scarce more for their sakes than your own. You may be negligent of your son's instruction: but it is on you, as well as himself, that his ignorance and contemptibleness will bring both reproach and inconvenience. You may be regardless of his morals: but you may be the person, who will at last the most severely feel his want of them. You may be indifferent about his religion: but remember, dutifulness to you is one great precept of religion: and all the rest promote such habits, as you may bitterly repent, when it is too late, your omission to cultivate in him; and live and die miserable on his account, whom timely care would have made your joy and honour.

The Educator of youth will first perfect himself in each needful qualification, and then apply to forming others. In every science he will join the discoveries of later times.

times with ſuch inſtruction, as may render the learning of former ages intelligible; and prudently direct the more particular attention of each perſon to ſuch things, as may chiefly relate to their future part in life.

The foundations of religion he will lay deep and ſtrong: recommending the great articles of it, not to the paſſions of thoſe under his care, by warmth and vehemence; but to their reaſon and faith, by juſt explications and concluſive arguments: neither loading revelation with unauthoriſed doctrines and needleſs difficulties; nor yielding up the leaſt real part of it, to defend the reſt; nor altering the leaſt, to give it a more plauſible appearance. A diſputing and cavilling temper he will endeavour to reſreſs; but will treat with all tenderneſs the doubts of an ingenuous mind: and ever encourage that ſacred regard to truth, which makes men worthy of eſteem, even whiſt they err, and is the great ſecurity of their returning into the right way.

To civil government he will conſcientiouſly teach that dutiful obedience and honour, which chriſtianity requires all ſubjects to pay; and which the happieſt
sub-

subjects in the world ought to pay with the chearfullest gratitude. He will discourage with all possible care, the rage of party zeal; which warm and unexperienced minds too often mistake for public spirit. Admitted in this fair disguise, it possesses the whole man; tinctures his way of thinking on almost every subject; leads him to hate and injure worthy persons, to admire and associate amongst very bad ones; with whom this immoral temper stands in the stead of all merit, whilst indeed it hinders the acquiring of any. As life goes on, these evils increase: of which all the world complains, but unhappily indulges them at the same time; instead of each curbing, on his own side, the eagerness and keenness of so malevolent a principle. Young persons should therefore be reminded, that the seats of learning are purposely sequestered from the busy scenes of life; that the time for engaging in those will come but too soon: and mean while the generous ardor of youth should be exerted in making the preparation of useful knowledge and virtuous habits; but ever tempered with such mildness and diffidence concerning matters, of which they need
not

not judge yet, as they will every day see more necessary in order to judge and act right.

This is indeed one part of morals : and on every other part the director of education will have an attentive eye. Even the sallies of a well-meant fervor he will prudently moderate, when they give religion a gloomy appearance, or add to it a needless burden. But much more strictly will he guard against the opposite extreme of libertinism and profaneness : labouring to keep up, not only an outward form of regularity, but a serious awe of God, and sense of duty, in every mind ; watching over each tendency to vice ; and considering wilful neglect of application, as a dangerous kind of guilt. In order to this great end of preserving morals, he will preserve and countenance, as far as it remains possible, that temperance of living, simplicity of appearance, and frugality of expence, which keep the mind in fit temper for the exercise of its faculties, and defend it from the corruptions of luxury and vanity ; lay the foundations of health and prudence in men for the rest of their days, and prepare them

them to be virtuous and easy in whatever stations may prove their share.

It remains only now, that the person, of whom all this care is taken, should know and improve his own happiness. Too many there are, that set out upon the important journey of life, without a skilful, or perhaps a friendly hand, to conduct them through the difficulties of the untried and hazardous way. These are greatly excuseable in their faults, and pitiable in their miseries. But of you God and man will expect attainments, that may bear porportion to the advantages, with which you are blessed. Nature engages your parents; duty, honour, and interest, your instructors, to consult your welfare: which they desire as much as yourselves, and understand better. Restrain therefore and apply yourselves as they direct; though you not only feel it painful, but see it not yet beneficial: and trust those, who have all imaginable claim to be trusted, that, by quick degrees, the pain will wear off, and the benefit be evident.

Their province, who are devoted to the service of religion, will be to appear, perhaps after a very short preparation

tion in an age strongly prejudiced against them and their function: sure objects, without merit, of contempt and hatred; but, with it, capable still of being esteemed and useful. This situation, you see requires in the first place, that you carefully acquaint yourselves with the proofs, the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel Revelation. Fear not therefore making free enquiry into every thing. Only begin not your enquiry, till you are qualified: and end it not, till you have considered matters throughly. Young minds, and often the most generous of them, are apt to pursue truth with an impatience, that occasions their missing it. Nothing ought ever to stand against full evidence well weighed: but many things may induce those, who have yet had little time for thought, to think again, and be diffident in the mean while. For not only the world too commonly imputes to a man, all his life, the indigested notions of his early years; but persons list themselves by positive talk, and then cannot retreat. With this caution, and with due method, diligence will go far in acquiring knowledge. But knowledge is only one part of what must be attended to. The unguarded

guarded conduct, even of persons younger days, will be treasured up in many a malicious memory to their future disadvantage: and, though an affectation of untimely gravity fits ill, yet innocence and piety are the duties of every age. They especially, whose profession will make a stricter abstinence from doubtful and imprudent pleasures expected of them hereafter, will find it much the safest and easiest to begin now; and, by an uniform life, grow regularly up into that esteem, which their destination will require.

And though neither the same diligence of application, nor such accuracy of conduct, may appear necessary in those of higher rank: yet an improved understanding must be an advantage, and the want of it a blemish, proportionably conspicuous, as the station, in which either appears, is public; and the choice, how life shall be spent, is always important in the same degree, as the persons are who make it. Such therefore, of all others, should not take it hastily for granted, that an immoral course is right. To begin with virtue, at least till fair inquiry rejects it, is evidently the safe part. No one ever bitterly condemned himself,
that

that he had ſpent his younger years ſoberly: many have, that they did not. Then, ſome degrees of vice are owned to produce miſery: and every vice leads on to worſe degrees of itſelf, and variety of others. Or, though a vicious perſon could depend on ſuffering no preſent harm; yet he cannot fail of doing a great deal: and a man would not chooſe, that the chief traces, which he leaves behind him, to mark out his paſſage through life, ſhould be ſo many injuries done his fellow-creatures. At leaſt no one would venture upon this, till he were ſure there is no ſuperior inſpector of his conduct. Now there cannot be certainty againſt religion: and there are ſuch evidences for it, as muſt require more than a few ſlight cavils, or bold jeſts, to overturn them. A careful examination then it juſtly demands. And if upon ſuch examination it prove true, as undoubtedly it will; remember it is a moſt ſerious truth, in which the foremoſt of mankind is equally concerned with the meaneſt. Therefore in a caſe of ſuch moment, let no falſe ſhame, nor favourite paſſion prevail over you; but “give your hearts early to the Lord that made you.” Lay
the

the foundation of your lives here, on the firm ground of christian faith; and build upon it whatever is just and good, worthy and noble, till the structure be complete in moral beauty. The world, into which you are entering, lies in wait with variety of temptations. Unfavourable sentiments of religion will soon be suggested to you; and all the snares of luxury, false honour, and interest, spread in your way; which with most of your rank are too successful, and to many fatal. Happy the few, that in any part of life become sensible of their errors; and, with painful resolution, tread back the wrong steps, which they have taken! But happiest of men is he, who, by an even course of right conduct, from the first, as far as human frailty permits, hath at once avoided the miseries of sin, the sorrows of repentance, and the difficulties of virtue; who not only can think of his present state with composure, but reflect on his past behaviour with thankful approbation, and look forwards with unmixed joy to that important future hour, when he shall appear before God, and humbly offer to him a whole life spent in his service.

SER-

S E R M O N I I .

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING ; .

PREACHED BEFORE AN ASSEMBLY OF MINISTERS.

ACTS VII. 32.

*And Moses was learned in all the wisdom
of the Egyptians : and was mighty in
words and in deeds.*

WE have no very clear lights, by
which to discover, in what the
learning of the ancient Egyptians con-
sisted ; and it is quite unnecessary on the
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present occasion to enter into any of the particulars of it, that have been handed down. The whole current of antiquity directs us to this country, as being very early the seat of learning and knowledge; and there are instances on record of the wise men of other nations travelling hither for improvement.

It seems to be mentioned in my text with design to do honour to the character of Moses, that he was learned, or instituted, as the word signifies, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. It is taken notice of plainly, as the foundation of those memorable actions, by which the early part of his life was distinguished; and, I see no impropriety in supposing, that the knowledge he acquired in the schools of Egypt, was in part a qualification for the province he afterwards held with so much dignity and usefulness, as the law-giver, governor and leader of the Jewish people.

This however is certain, that the learning of ancient times at least, was designed to serve as a discipline for the most distinguished scenes of civil and social life: and; that such acquisitions, as the schools afforded, were a considerable part of the
virtuous

virtuous and manly education of future lawgivers, statesmen, and generals; and of all other persons, who were expected to be the supports and ornaments of the respective states, to which they belonged.

And it is found to be true in fact; that those, who have made the most distinguished figure in the busy scenes of life, have often had a considerable share of those kinds of learning, which were most esteemed in their day. A slender acquaintance with the Grecian and Roman history will furnish instances abundantly sufficient to confirm this observation.

This then, it should seem, was the tendency of ancient learning. If that of modern times has had a different tendency; to what shall we ascribe it? human nature is ever the same; and the grandeur and good order of civil societies in all ages depend on the same or similar causes. If what has past for learning therefore has ever appeared to operate differently; it must probably be, because it is of a different kind: and the remedy for this is to be sought, not in the neglect of learning; but in a care to reform

the abuses, which have crept into the sciences; and to restore those branches to their deserved honour, which have been the fruitful causes of so much order and happiness in private and social life.

It has been one very unhappy effect of such a change in the studies and pursuits of the learned, wherever it has taken place, that learning itself is fallen into contempt with the busy and active part of mankind. They have been apt to consider it, as only fit to fill the heads, and exercise the wits of idle people; but as of no use at all to those, who are designed to fill up the more active stations, and serve their country in the faithful discharge of all the offices of peace and war.

Nay learning and knowledge have been represented, as not only useless, but hurtful; as the means of corrupting the native manners of a brave people; as the causes of idleness and effeminacy; and as necessary to the extinction of that noble ardour for public liberty, which is their best security against all usurpation. Religion too has been thought to be in danger from the advancement of learning:

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ing: and the torrent of infidelity and profaneness, which in some ages has been likely to bear down every thing great and good, has by some been reckoned to owe its rise, or at least a considerable increase to its streams, to the fountains of knowledge too freely laid open, and diffused in too general and undistinguishing a manner.

To judge of the truth and justness of these heavy charges, it will be necessary to take a view of the several kinds of learning; that we may see whether they are all equally guilty; or whether whilst false science is of a hurtful or dangerous tendency, the true is not on the contrary innocent, ornamental and useful.

And here language, which contains the elements of all learning and knowledge comes first to be considered. That the knowledge of words is necessary to diffuse science must be obvious to every one. But the study of foreign languages, the living and the dead, employs so much of our time, especially in the early part of life, that the consideration of it is not to be thus passed over. Why should any tongue but our own employ our attention,

is a question, that has been sometimes asked; and it is a question which may be asked with more appearance of reason in this than in almost any preceding age, even by those who are friends to the sciences. We have, say they, a sufficient number of good authors on all subjects in our own tongue; and our time might be much better employed, in making ourselves masters of their sentiments, than in collecting words and phrases from other tongues; and searching with so much diligence for that, which will not after all repay the pains, which the search must cost us.

But the study of languages is not without its use. If it be properly pursued it strengthens the capacities of the mind, and enlarges our experience; and the comparison of different languages together, with just critical remarks on their general agreement to the nature of things, and the powers of the human mind, and the peculiarities observable in each, besides the entertainments it will afford to a curious observer, may prove the means of enriching our native tongue with that copiousness and variety, which will enable

Serm. II. *preached before an Assembly, &c.* 31

ble us to deliver our sentiments on all subjects with a superior strength and elegance.

And not to insist upon it, that languages are usually acquired at an age, when nothing else almost can be learned; it may be added, if the experience and observation of other nations, be worth any thing, it is very desirable, where we cannot collect them for ourselves, to take them from the words of the original authors.

After all it is readily owned, that the knowledge of words alone can be of little significance; and, if any suffer them to ingross their whole attention to the neglect of things, their folly and absurdity will deserve the severest censure. It is chiefly to gain the best access to the stores of knowledge, which are preserved amongst other nations, and particularly in the writings of ancient authors, that the languages are expected to engage our attention; and if we do not apply them to this use, we might almost as well have no acquaintance with them at all.

As then the only or chief use of learning any language is, that we may attain

a just knowledge of things; it will be natural to consider in the next place, the nature and uses of such knowledge as we are capable of acquiring.

As to the knowledge of nature in the confined sense, in which it is often taken for the knowledge of the visible, material world; our first acquaintance with it is owing to the impressions made on the senses by external objects. The representation of these on the mind is in some cases lively, strong and accurate; and in others weak and confused. Some are at the pains to collect and compare the impressions, they receive; to observe the changes, which the several bodies around them are capable of, and their different affections and properties with regard to one another; whilst others never go a single step beyond the particular impression, which the mind receives; and unless where the necessities of life exact a closer attention are scarce capable of recalling any impressions, which have formerly been present with the mind. These, it is obvious, must be quite strangers to the course and order of nature; and, if any knowledge of it is to be acquired, it must be in the former method.

The

Serm. II. preached before an Assembly, &c. 33

The great misfortune is, that the conceit and prejudice of mankind will not suffer them to conduct their inquiries by the rules, which nature prescribes. When a few observations have been made, a theory is immediately established; and then all the operations of nature are to be explained agreeably to it. The toil of a laborious investigation and slow deduction from a variety of experiments will not suit the natural rapidity of the greater part of mankind; and, rather than discover an excusable and modest ignorance, they will by a precipitate determination prevent all future inquiries and improvements.

True natural knowledge is of a very different kind from any thing men of this sort have invented, or can possibly invent. It consists in such an acquaintance with surrounding objects, as will enable us to apply them to the use and ornament of human life. And this sort of knowledge is not to be acquired, but by the observation of things as they are, and the frequent repetition of the most accurate experiments. This science, as it will draw very considerable improvements from the arts already practised,

makes an ample return for the advantages which it receives. It is from this quarter, that the artist is furnished with materials, on which to employ his industry, and assisted to use his labour and skill to the greatest advantage. The study of nature supplies him with patterns of the easiest and best method of operation; enables him to do what is superior to his natural strength; and to compass what lies within the reach of his abilities in a more easy and expeditious manner.

And can it ever be questioned whether researches of this kind are innocent and safe? will it not be allowed, that they are highly useful? for besides the elegant and agreeable employment they afford at a time of leisure; the relaxation they give from severer studies; and their effect to extend and improve the powers of the mind: they enlarge, as has been shown, the sphere of our activity; and frequently supply very powerful motives to that general industry, which is most friendly to the human constitution; and spread through the several societies of mankind that decency and good order
which

which are the causes of so many private and public blessings.

It is a further advantage of these studies, that by a more exact acquaintance with particular natures, we shall be enabled to perceive the connexion of some of the greater parts of the universe; so as to convince us of the good design, which prevails throughout all nature; and lead us to that full persuasion of the power, wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, which will fit us to celebrate his perfections, and engage in the other offices of religion with knowledge and understanding.

Whilst that kind of philosophy then, which is built on fine-spun theories, is useless and vain; that which proceeds on experiments, by its connexion with the useful and ornamental arts, and by the arguments it supplies for the existence and perfections of God, has the most agreeable aspect on the best interests of mankind.

The different methods in which moral inquiries have been carried on; will in like manner give us occasion to lament the ill effects of false, and represent the advantage of true science. The dry

and abstract manner of considering moral subjects, abounding with needless subtilties and refinements, has it is acknowledged been too common in the schools of learning; and the effects have been such, as might be expected. Those who have been esteemed the greatest masters in this way, when they have come to speak or write on moral subjects, for the instruction and benefit of the world, have acquitted themselves so poorly; and done such little service to the cause of virtue with the many definitions and nice distinctions, in which they had been instructed; that the more sensible part of mankind have easily despised their learned and laborious inquiries; and applied themselves to other masters for the knowledge they required. The natural, undisguised eloquence of those, who have just described the genuine sentiments of their own hearts; and discovered that warm approbation of integrity, compassion, and the other virtues, which they naturally raise in an honest mind, is far more agreeable to persons of good taste, than more accurate compositions of an abstract and metaphysical nature.

It

It is in the heart and life of man, that we shall best discover what we should know on the subject of morals; and our acquaintance with this part of nature, as with every other, will be best improved by experience and observation. Whether virtue hath its foundation in the understanding, or in an implanted sense, as it is a question of inferior consequence, so it seems quite foreign to my present design. The first principles of it are certainly to be sought in human nature; and the knowledge of its obligations must be acquired by a strict attention to what the Author of our nature has written on the table of our hearts.

Our first knowledge of the principles and affections of the human heart is drawn from experience; but it is not so safe perhaps to trust entirely to our own consciousness: we must look abroad into the world, in order to discover the sentiments and affections of others: and as there is danger of being misled by confining our views to the manners of a particular age or place, it is necessary to take a larger view; and, by the study of history, to supply the narrowness of our own particular and personal observation.

In

In conversing with the scenes, which history presents us with, we have just and striking pictures of the several virtues and vices: they raise our most natural sentiments: the generous principles of the human mind have full room to exert themselves: and our praise and censure follow those actions, to which they respectively belong. This is instructing in virtue in the truest and best sense; it turns our attention to what is most just and worthy; and at the same time confirms us in the love of it. Fiction is not without its use; but true history more especially is attended with this advantage. The writers of fiction are very apt to represent mankind according to their own notions: the characters, as well as the events, are often the work of the imagination alone: and they are invented rather to serve some particular purpose, or to support some singular opinion, than to lead us to the knowledge of the human heart. But the wise and grave historian, who really intends to instruct us in what is past, will be the most likely to draw from the life, and to delineate the actions and characters of men according to their true nature.

And

And who can pretend to deny the advantage of such studies? Whilst the philosopher coldly instructs, if he does indeed instruct us, in the nature of good and evil, and the obligations of virtue: in the delightful pages of a just history, we meet with that, which warms and elevates the mind, and disposes to an honourable and worthy conduct.

The great merit of this kind of knowledge consists in its extensive use and application. It contains the duties of a man and a citizen, and all the important offices of peace and war. By this states are formed and governed; and all the rights of governors and subjects properly adjusted.

From this entertaining and excellent study, we proceed by an easy gradation to what is in a more peculiar sense divine and religious. And it would be well for us, says a noble writer, if before we ascend into the higher regions of divinity, we would vouchsafe to descend a little into ourselves, and bestow some poor thoughts on plain honest morals. Our minds when tinged with just notions of good and evil, and filled with a true sense of what is most excellent and lovely in human nature,

nature, will proceed to the contemplation of the great first Cause well prepared to conceive of his inflexible truth, impartial justice, and everlasting mercy; or, to express them all in one, his perfect goodness. We shall see on better evidence, that his commandments are holy, just and good; that his administration is most righteous; and that the greatest good of the whole is the end of all his appointments.

The last and highest improvement of the mind in the present state may be expected from the study of the holy scriptures: and as the advantage of true science in other respects hath been considered already: it will be expected with the highest reason, that I consider a little the assistance it will afford us here.

And in the first place there are none, who may not see the greatest use of a critical knowledge in the languages, in which they are written. Without this they never could have been translated at all; and now, that we have them in our own tongue, it is still highly convenient to trace up the streams to the fountain from which they spring, that we may be convinced of their integrity and judgment, who

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who have undertaken and executed this laborious task; or that we may discover and correct their errors.

As to the study of nature in the visible works of creation, though it may not appear to have any immediate connection with the knowledge of the scriptures; yet as far as it tends to give us juster sentiments of the divine perfections and character, it plainly appears subservient to the interests of natural, and consequently revealed religion.

But nothing will be so just a preparative for scripture learning, as the study of human nature, and that rich variety of moral and divine knowledge, which is connected with it. This furniture of the mind will give us large and comprehensive views of the design of revelation, and effectually secure us from the danger of perverting it to the purposes of tyranny and superstition. As it is supposed to come from God, we shall easily conclude, that the ends and purposes of it must be agreeable to his essential perfections; and as it is intended for the use of man, that it is fitted to improve and perfect the highest powers of the human mind: and this will naturally direct our thoughts to affairs of greater moment, than any
minute

minute trifling criticisms on particular parts; and lead us to consider its general grand tendency, and the excellent means it employs to attain it.

I have thus been attempting to shew, that the improvements of learning are not only innocent but useful; and that they have a nearer or more remote connection with what is most important and valuable in human life.

Let it be allowed, that learning is not of absolute necessity, to such a competent knowledge of the duties of religion, and the offices of virtue, as will make a man a very worthy useful member of society. We depend not on instruction for the knowledge of right and wrong; and the chief instances of duty and obedience bring with them such a recommendation from God himself, who has adapted the powers and principles of the human mind to his most holy laws, that it is generally impossible we should be ignorant of them, or of the obligations they bring us under. And in matters of science the efforts of a great genius, who has none of the aids of learning; and draws from his own stock, rather than the writings of others, will have something more
great

great and noble, than the exacter productions of scholars, with all the aids which reading and learning can supply. But it is easy to observe, that the natural dispositions to virtue may be improved by good rules; and the way to true wisdom made plainer and easier by the ministry of instruction. It is justly observed by Cicero, that there have been many who have risen to an high pitch of excellence without learning, and by a kind of divine habit in their natures have approved themselves just and wise. I add this too, says he, that nature oftner attains glory and excellence without learning, than learning without nature: but when to an excellent and noble nature, is added the method and discipline of instruction; then will the mind exert all its latent powers, and rise to a singular perfection and excellence.

It is very agreeable to consider the illustration, which the foregoing theory will receive from the history of mankind. The usefulness of learning and knowledge appears from the happy condition of the states, by which they have been cultivated, and from the many evils, which have grown up when the sciences have been

been despised or neglected. And this is a subject, which though it has not been entirely overlooked, yet seems to deserve the more particular consideration of such, as are capable of doing justice to it.

Though I cannot propose to myself so large a design ; it may be worth our while just to reflect on the state of things, in those times, when ignorance so universally prevailed, and the very records and monuments of past improvements were involved in one common ruin ; and on the changes, which took place, when the interests of learning began once more to be attended to. It is not easy to assign the causes which combine to produce that ignorance, which overspread so many parts of Europe ; and even those countries which have been distinguished by the encouragement they give to the pursuits of learning. It has often been imputed to the incursions of the northern nations ; and it may be easily believed, that their condition and manner of life were not very favourable to literary improvements ; the wars they occasioned, in the countries into which they entered, would be apt to give a new turn to the thoughts and inclinations of their inhabitants ; and
though

though their enemies may have exceeded in their accounts of their fierceness and cruelty, yet it will be allowed, I suppose, that through ignorance or malice, they frequently destroyed the remains of ancient learning. But still there were other causes of this vast change, which had their effect, though they operated in a more gradual and silent manner. The trifling controversies, which had infested the christian world; the zeal, with which they had been carried on; and the absurd opinions, which had been frequently established by great and venerable councils, had greatly injured the cause of true learning, as well as of real christianity: and through the vanity, presumption and uncharitableness of those, who had professed to teach, the people were but too well prepared for a state of great and general ignorance. But whatever the causes of it might be, the effect it had on the valuable interests of mankind were such as must reflect the greatest honour on the sciences. It was in these dark and ignorant ages that those opinions were received, and those customs established, which are the greatest disgrace to human nature; and the fruitful causes of confusion

on and misery in society. And as to religion, this was the time, when the grand corruption of christianity, which began to work so early, grew so prodigiously as to infect all its parts; and when the chief of those malignant disorders, which have since threatned its very vitals, begun or greatly increased. It was in this age, that chains were forged, with which to bind the understandings and consciences of men; and the chief absurdities and impieties, with which the christian world has been since burdened, received their establishment.

These were the unhappy effects of ignorance and barbarity; and when in the course of human affairs the interests of learning were again attended to, there were proportionable improvements in civil and social life. The arts grew in repute; the fierce ~~natures~~ of men were softened and refined; and just and regular forms of government, and the due administration of public justice succeeded to the former disorder and confusion.

But it was in religion, that the happy effects of the revival of learning were most observable. Mankind, though long accustomed to the absurdities and follies

follies of ignorance and darkness, when light broke in upon them, began to see how grossly they had been imposed upon; and to feel the weight of those chains, with which they had been bound. The sweets of knowledge made them desirous to extend it; and the spirit of free inquiry which was encouraged on other subjects, inclined them to examine what they had been taught in religion; and to search for the original and foundation of received practices. The issue of this has been such a reformation in the christian world, as must do honour to the age, in which it was begun; and will do honour to every age, which shall have the resolution and integrity to continue and perfect it.

How greatly the revival of learning has contributed to bring about this happy event is abundantly evident. In our own country in particular, our improvements in learning, and the reformation in religion, as well as the other valuable blessings of social life, appear to have advanced with equal steps. The comparison of our own with other countries is extremely difficult to be executed with any degree of impartiality; but we need
not

not be afraid of saying, that this nation has at least had its share of great and learned men; and been distinguished by a more general application to the sciences than many others. And is there any nation, where the arts, which serve to the use and ornament of human life have been pursued with more success? Do not our excellent form of government, the security of public liberty, and the regular administration of justice, and all the blessings of domestic and private life, with which we are favoured, bear a most clear testimony to the advantages, which learning and knowledge afford? And above all the happy progress which the reformation has made; the care and diligence with which the scriptures have been studied; the honour, which christianity has received from the candid and just representations, which have been given of its design; and the just foundations on which the authority of it hath been placed, are certain proofs that true science at least has a most favourable aspect on its interests; and that the injuries it receives in an ignorant and barbarous age are effectually redressed by the increase of real knowledge.

But

But whatever may have been done already to promote useful knowledge in these nations, and to gain the many great and noble blessings, which are connected with it; there is still room for our labours, if we can do any thing, which may be the means of enlarging our acquisitions; or at least of preserving those, which have been already made.

This is a point, which deserves the particular attention of christian ministers. There have been times, in which many of this order have found it their interest to keep the people in ignorance, and discourage inquiry. Their doctrines would not bear to be examined; their chief emoluments arose from the credulity, ignorance and superstition of their followers; and their curious fabric was sure to fall, as soon as the foundations, on which it rested, should be discovered. This mean and interested policy in those, who pass for instructors, is justly condemned at all times: it shows a poor, narrow spirit to oppose the advancement of learning upon any such considerations. But it is often as politic, as it is just and fit in itself, to espouse the cause of learning,

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ing, and to lift ourselves in the number of its declared friends.

It seems peculiarly necessary in the present age, in which a regard to learning, and a desire, to make some proficiency in it, is become so universal, that the ministers of the christian religion should be distinguished by that kind of learning at least, which more immediately relates to the ministerial office. And here what shall I say? that it will be a means of extending our credit and influence with our people; of removing or lessening the prejudices of our enemies; and promoting the honour of that particular denomination by which we are distinguished? I will say what is much more, that it will conduce to our becoming the wise, consistent advocates of truth and virtue, and the friends of mankind. In a word, next to integrity of heart and purity of manners, I can hardly think of a more desirable accomplishment in a christian minister, than a good and well improved understanding.

We need the concurrence of all orders in a design of such importance; and it will not be judged improper to recommend it to all, who are hearty in the interests

terests of religion and virtue, to apply their thoughts to this subject; and show themselves the friends of knowledge and inquiry.

If you, our hearers, discover a generous freedom in controverted points; if you are willing to give up ancient errors; if you encourage all just attempts to remove from christianity every corrupt addition; and to clear it of those incumbrances, which so visibly obstruct its progress and influence; you will strengthen the hands of your ministers, and encourage them to seek with more diligence and chearfulness all the improvements of sound, useful learning; and to lay before you from time to time the result of their impartial inquiries.

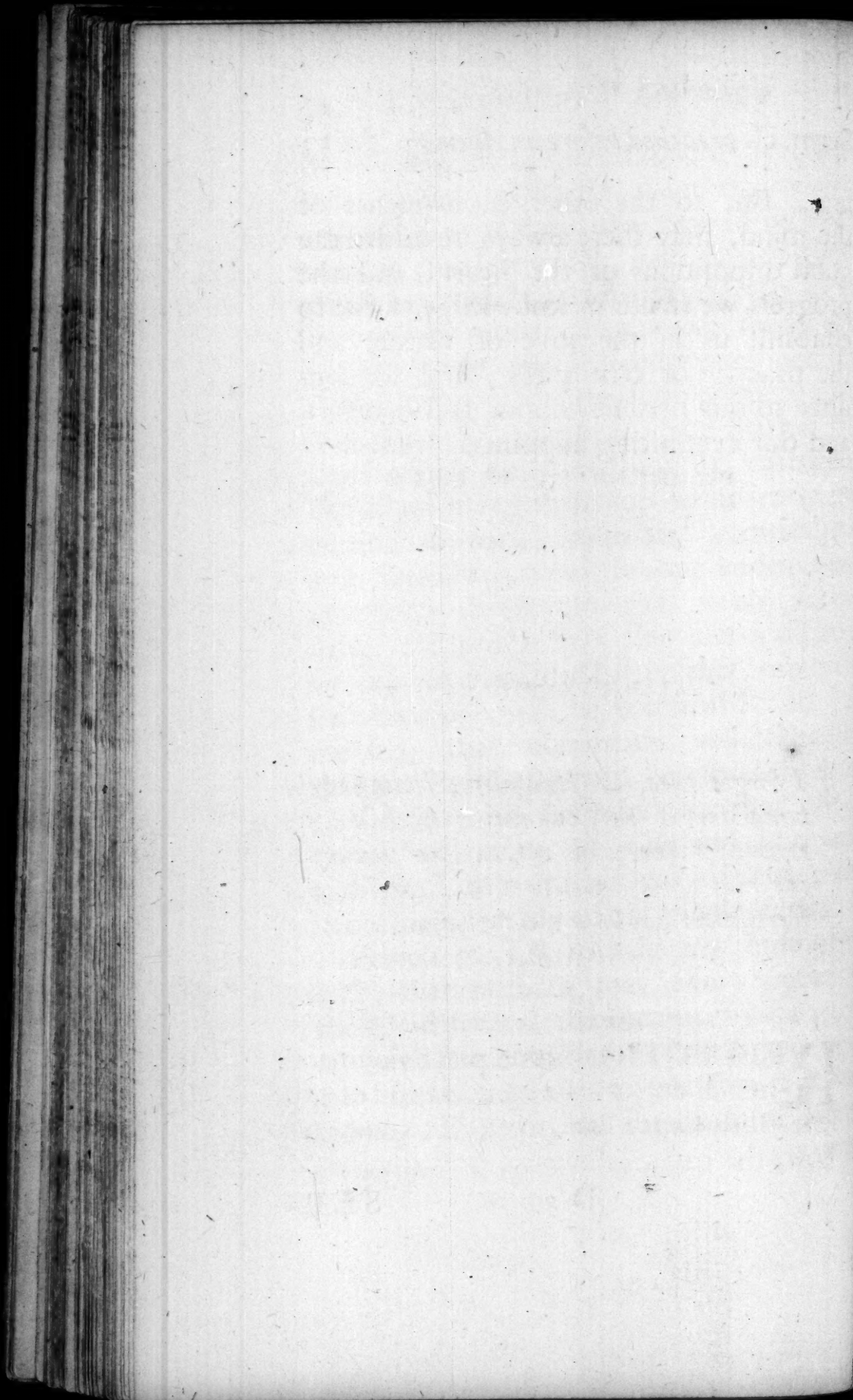
To conclude, the best way of showing yourselves the friends of learning will be by a generous attention to the liberal education of youth. It is from the accomplishments and character of the younger part, that we are to expect under God to enlarge or even to preserve the stock of knowledge, which is put into our hands. If we neglect the culture and improvement of young minds; if we suffer their capacities to be ruined

by idleness, or to be dissipated by pleasure; if we only train them up in the arts of gain, without any care to instruct them in good learning, and possess their minds with useful knowledge; the next age will of course degenerate from the present; and unless the providence of God interpose, we shall sink again into that state of ignorance and barbarity from which we have happily emerged. But if we bring them up in an early attention to real, valuable knowledge, and happily succeed in our endeavour to enrich them with this noble furniture, the prospect is fair and inviting: we may reasonably hope, that our present blessings will be continued and increased, that commerce will flourish, that public liberty will be established on an immoveable foundation; that christianity will attain its deserved honours, and gradually extend its influence, till it becomes the joy of the whole earth.

Permit me just to add my unfeigned wish, that nothing may ever appear in those, who have the ornament of a good and well-improved understanding, which may fix a disgrace, or occasion any unworthy reflexions, on the cause of learning.

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ing. But to the other endowments of the mind, may there always be added the good dispositions of the heart; and the progress we make in knowledge, serve to establish us in the love of virtue, and the practice of true piety; and so conduce to our present honour and comfort, and our everlasting happiness! Amen.



S E R M O N III.

ON PUBLIC VIRTUE;

A FAST SERMON.

PSALM CXXXVII. 5, 6.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning: If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

REFLECTION upon past enjoyments tends only to the aggravation of present sufferings: and yet, I know not how, the mind of man is ever fondly dis-

posed to draw the painful parallel betwixt the happiness which he once possessed, and the misery which he now feels. This was the case of the captive Israelites, as it is pathetically described in the Psalm before us. "By the rivers of Babylon," says the divine poet, "there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion : we hanged our harps upon the willows, which grew in the midst thereof." As the soul in affliction is apt to dwell upon every circumstance which heightens the sorrow, he here represents his harp, that sacred instrument devoted to his God, now laid aside, silent and neglected : For "how indeed could he sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Oppression and servitude throw a damp upon every nobler faculty : no wonder then the sacred musician could ill exert the heavenly harmony under the dispiriting pressure of a foreign tyranny. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

Here the faithful patriot turns, by a very natural transition, from lamenting over his country's fate, to the strongest professions of preserving his affection for ever inviolable towards her : "If I for-
" get

“get thee, O Jerusalem, let my right
“hand forget her cunning. If I do not
“remember thee, let my tongue cleave
“to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer
“not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

Under the incitement of so animating an example, I shall offer a few sentiments concerning that virtue which produced this glorious resolution; and after endeavouring to explain the nature and obligation of love to our country, shall attempt to point out that conduct, which seems requisite to testify the sincerity of this affection.

The love of our country is an inflexible determination of mind to promote, by all justifiable means, the happiness of that society of which we are members; to attend to it with a warm and active zeal; to neglect no opportunity by which we may, without violating the great law of universal benevolence, advance her honour and interest; and generously to sacrifice to this governing principle all inferior regards and less extensive claims of what nature soever.

This is that elevated passion, of all others the most necessary as well as most becoming to mankind; and yet, if we

believe the common complaints, of all others the least visible in the world. It lives, we are told, rather in description than reality, and is now represented as an antiquated and forgotten virtue. Wretched picture of the human race! If this be a just representation, we are degenerate indeed, insensible to the best of all social duties, counter-acting the common bond of alliance with our species, and checking the source of our most refined satisfactions.

There is in the souls of men a certain attractive power, which insensibly leads them to associate, and concert the plan of mutual happiness. If any thing be natural to us, it must be that passion which conduces to the preservation of the species. But nothing so manifestly contributes to that end, as this combining principle of fellowship; which must therefore be as certainly derived from nature, as the love we bear to our offspring, or that which they have for each other. The public is as, it were one great family; we are all children of one common mother, our country: she gives us all our birth, nursed our tender years, and supports our manhood. In this light therefore,

fore, our regards for her seem as natural as the implanted affection betwixt parents and children. It is then from the very frame of man, that the sense of a national brotherhood arises, and the ties of community arise out of the first principles of nature.

Whenever therefore this uniting instinct is obstructed in its operations by the unequal indulgence of private affection, the ballance of the passions is destroyed, and the kind intention of the Creator no less imprudently than impiously perverted.

I might here enlarge on the mutual delights given and received in the social entertainments and conversation of a people connected together with the same language, customs and institutions, and from thence shew the reasonableness of an affectionate attachment to the community: but I choose to point out the obligations to this associating virtue, as they arise from higher and more interesting principles.

The miseries of the state of nature are so evident, that there is no occasion to display them: every man is sensible that violence, rapine and slaughter must be

continually practised where no restraints are provided to curb the inordinancy of self-affection. To society then we owe our security from these miseries; and to a wisely constructed and well regulated government we stand indebted for our protection against those, who would encroach upon the equal share of liberty which belongs to all, or would molest individuals in the possession of what is fairly appropriated. And what an unspeakable satisfaction is it to be free, and to be able to call any thing one's own! Freedom and security diffuse a chearfulness over the most uncomfortable regions, and give a value to the most inconsiderable possessions: even a morsel of bread in the most frozen climate would be more worth contending for, if liberty crowned the meal, than the noblest possessions and greatest affluence under the mildest skies, if held at the merciless will of a civil or religious tyrant. And as such a happiness is only to be established by the love of society; as all the blessings we enjoy spring from this source; gratitude calls upon us to cultivate a principle to which we owe such transcendent obligations.

But

But the obligation rises upon us, when we consider, that from society is also derived a set of amiable duties, unknown to men in a detached and unconnected state. It is from this foundation that hospitality, gratitude, and generosity flow, with all the pleasing charities which adorn human nature. For where have those virtues their theatre, where is their scene of action, or how can they exert themselves, but in society? It is there alone we have opportunities of displaying the moral charms, and of exhibiting the glorious manifestation of good-will to mankind. On this account therefore society has a high demand for our affectionate regard.

But to be unmindful of the public is not only an argument of an ungrateful, it is a proof also of a dishonest temper of mind. God has assigned each of us our station, and a part which we are obliged to discharge in carrying on the great work of social happiness. If then I neglect the part appointed me, I am highly unjust; because I take a share of the benefits of society, and yet leave the burthen to be born by others. A greater injustice than this can scarcely be conceived.

He

He who injures particulars is indeed an offender; but he who withholds from the public the service and affection to which it is entitled, is a criminal of a far higher degree; as he thereby robs a whole body of people, and deprives the community of her just demand. If God has given to one man a good understanding, and he does not exert it for the general advantage by advice and counsel; if to another, riches, and he will not assist with his liberality; if to a poor man, strength, and he will not aid with his labour; if in short any be wanting in pursuing the benevolent principle, by directing his talents to their proper ends, he deserves to be treated as a common spoiler; inasmuch as he takes what properly belongs not to him, the title of each man's share of the benefits of society arising only from that proportion, which he himself has contributed.

But if we could be so obdurate, as to steel our hearts against the dictates of nature, the will of Heaven, and the calls of gratitude and justice; yet there is another consideration, which if duly attended to, must move the most unsocial breast. The passion which I am recommending,

mending, is no less our interest than our duty: and whenever we are indifferent to the concerns of our country, we are in effect and by just consequence, indifferent to our own particular advantage.

Public good is as it were a common bank, in which every individual has his respective share: and consequently, whatever damage that sustains, the individuals unavoidably partake of the calamity. If liberty be destroyed no particular member can escape the chains: if the credit of the associated body sink, his fortune sinks with it: if the sons of violence prevail and plunder the public stock, his part cannot be rescued from the spoil; and some real share, be it more or less, all, even the meanest, have in this national fund; and a valuable one too, though it were nothing but the lowest earnings of industrious labour. If then we have a true affection for ourselves; if we would reap the fruits of our industry, and enjoy our property in security, we must stand firm to the cause of public virtue. Otherwise, we had better return to the raw herbage for our food, and to the inclemencies of the open sky
for

for our covering; go back to uncultivated nature, where our wants would be fewer, and our appetites less. Such a situation, notwithstanding all its inconveniences, is far preferable to a barbarous government, and far more desirable than the lot of slaves.

We see then how closely the kind Creator has connected our interest with our duty, and made it each man's happiness to contribute to the welfare of all his fellow-citizens.

But still the more noble motive to a generous soul is that which springs from a benevolent desire of diffusing the joys of life to all around him. There is nothing he thinks so desirable as to be the instrument of doing good; and the farther it is extended, the greater is his delight, and the more glorious his character. Benignity to friends and relations is but a narrow-spirited quality compared with this; and perhaps as frequently the effect of caprice or pride, as of a benevolent temper. But when our flow of good-will spreads itself to all the society, and in them to distant posterity; when charity rises into public spirit, and partial affection is extended into general benevolence

nevolence, then it is that man shines in the highest lustre, and is the truest image of his Divine Maker.

But notwithstanding all that has been said in favour of this affection, laudable as it is, we are not however to forget, that it may be so conducted as to become a very criminal passion. If any associated body apprehending themselves superior to their neighbour-states, should for that reason only invade their rights, this would be to undermine the very foundation of society; and consequently an unjustifiable enterprize. Does true patriotism inspire such a conduct? Does the love of our own country teach us to aggrandize it at the ruin of another? Undoubtedly not. And if we think at all, we must allow such attempts utterly repugnant to the fundamental law of universal charity. Hard would be his fate, who should be commanded to such a service; and glorious the triumph of his soul, if he resolved to decline it! In vain would he call in the example of antient Rome for his encouragement; for after all the extravagant encomiums bestowed upon her patriotism, we shall scarce be able to clear it from the imputation

tation of flagrant impiety. Rome early possessed with the high fanaticism of distinction and empire, declared war against mankind; and out of that feverish fondness for dominion and renown, laid desolate all the known world. Their possessions, their habitations, their paintings, their sculptures, all their riches were the spoils of injured nations. Thus they erected to themselves an empire as unweildy as it was unjust, on the ruins of their fellow-creatures. What then are all their beautiful lectures and pompous declamations on the love of their country? What their laboured orations in praise of liberty? Indisputable proofs indeed of their eloquence; but not so of their humanity. If the language of benevolence were to constitute the character, you must allow it is due to these Romans: but if actions are to ascertain the right, we shall find it a difficult task to make good their claim, though we were masters even of their own eloquence.

Look into the city, and behold the inhabitants; there you will find this celebrated freedom spreading itself only amongst particular branches, and giving a few the licence to tyrannize over an infinite

nite number of miserable slaves, rendered more wretched by having always before their eyes a disagreeable subject of comparison. Look into the provinces, and you behold scenes of the utmost barbarity and horror. Now and then, it is true, you see the conquered enjoying a little ease under a humane governor: but in general, their oppressions were intolerable, and their whole administration no better than a course of hostility and plunder.

It is our felicity that we are not members of such a society. We live in a nation which draws not the sword for conquest, but for justice, not to introduce, but to prevent slavery. The liberty, we contend for, is not the licence of a few to tyrannize over multitudes; but an equal freedom to all; so far as is consistent with good order, and the peace of government.

These are circumstances, which give a sanction to patriotism, and not only justify, but demand our most active resolutions to promote the welfare of the state by all those methods, which become a people connected together by the ties
of

of virtue. And what those methods are, I shall now attempt to shew.

The duty of governors I shall not here attempt to delineate; but proceed to enquire what is the business of those who move in a lower sphere. They who are not intrusted with the high offices of state, have it in their power nevertheless to do great service to the public in their respective stations. These are, like subordinate artists, employed in the under-work of the state: the governing power is the master-workman, whose province it is to put together the several parts, that each may move in harmony, and all be subservient to the general design.

The first thing then required of the subject is allegiance, the natural return for defence and safety. Allegiance and protection are indisputably reciprocal. He therefore, who will not give the former, has certainly no reasonable claim to the latter.

Another testimony of national affection is a generous and active zeal in support of the constitution; especially at a time of imminent danger and distress. Parsimony at such a juncture is unthrifty manage-

management, and may entail endless expence and irretrievable ruin on our posterity. In cases of exigence, it is provident œconomy to give up a part, in order to preserve the rest.

If we bear a true and cordial affection for our country, we shall be warm and active in her cause: a calm concern is inconsistent with true patriotism, which gives ardor to the coldest breast, and makes even cowards brave.

And we have this farther motive for inculcating public zeal; that in proportion as our attachment to the interest of the whole increases, all inferior regards must necessarily be diminished. Then might we have the pleasure to see faction retire, and the narrow temper of party changed into the diffusive spirit of general benevolence.

When Rome was under the apprehension of a powerful invasion, she instantly laid aside her civil broils; and domestic animosity stood for a time suspended. In this respect, she is an example worthy of imitation. And Britons sure have stronger motives to unite in active zeal, than that, or any other nation could ever boast.

boast. By how much the more the enjoyment of liberty hath been asserted, improved and established amongst us, so much the greater ought to be our resolution to maintain it; and the more scandalous is our folly if we lose it. "In
" all ages Britain hath been the temple,
" as it were, of liberty; whilst her sacred
" fires have been extinguished in so many
" countries, here they have been religiously kept alive. Here she hath her
" saints and confessors, and a whole army
" of martyrs; and the gates of hell have
" not hitherto prevailed against her. If
" then liberty be that delicious and
" wholesome fruit on which the British
" nation hath fed for ages, and to which
" we owe our riches, our strength, and
" all the advantages we boast of," surely it is highly incumbent upon us to cherish and cultivate " the tree, which bears
" that delicious fruit, and will continue
" to bear it, as long as we are careful to
" fence it in, and trench it round, against
" the beasts of the field and insects of the
" earth." It is then our duty to be ever vigorous and ardent in the support of such a community; to reverence the
majesty

majesty of the constitution, and conform our conduct to it; to cause all other inclinations to bow to this; to make it, in short, the constant object of our warmest wishes, closest attention, and highest admiration, "to prefer Jerusalem above our chief joy."

The next duty which challenges the patriot's regard is that of gratitude to our sovereign protector. And what returns of gratitude are not due to a prince who adheres so inflexibly to that system by which we have agreed to be governed, and in support of which we have been so prodigal of our blood and treasure?

We shall give a farther proof of our patriotism, if out of a sense of the obligations we lie under to those on whom the execution of the royal powers is delegated, we endeavour to strengthen their hands, oil the wheels of government, and smooth the rugged path of administration. Whilst they discharge their important duties with ability and honour, they have a just demand to the returns of grateful acknowledgments, and are entitled

entitled to the warmest applauses of the people whom they have faithfully served. And as it is incumbent upon us to pay this tribute; so it is natural for them to expect it. Glory is the reward of honourable toils; and public fame is the just retribution for public service; the love of which is so connected with virtue, that it seems scarcely possible to be possessed of the latter, without some degree of the former. Nor is this any form of derogation to the benevolence of the character. A good man feels a pleasure from the reputation he acquires by serving his country, because he loves it: but he does not love it merely for the sake of that pleasure. The passion did not spring from the expectation of the delight; but the delight was the consequence of the passion.

But after all these duties are discharged, we must not rest here; something more is still required at our hands to give the finishing testimony.

If the love of Britain is indeed the governing principle of your soul, you will give up every inclination which is incompatible

patible with it; nor will you cherish in your breasts any rivals of the favourite passion. All the train of darling vices must therefore be brought forth, and offered up as victims on the altars of liberty. You cannot be said to "prefer Jerusalem above your chief joy," whilst you foster any appetites which have a manifest tendency to her detriment. But what is so pernicious to the common weal as vice? And what vice, so much as luxury? It is this which enfeebles the body, corrupts the mind, impoverishes the fortune, and introduces every baneful cause of ruin. This it was which destroyed imperial Rome, and assisted Cæsar to enslave her citizens. She had strength enough left her to withstand the attacks of her enemies: but those, who seemed to wish her prosperity, had not virtue enough to give up their luxury to her interest. Rome therefore fell a sacrifice to the vices of her friends. Effects always correspond to their causes: if we pursue the same course, we must expect the same fate.

This consideration is surely sufficient to rouse our virtue, and make us abandon all intemperate pursuits. Arts and commerce

merce may flourish, and the consumption of their products be encouraged without abusing them to the prejudice of the owners, or the community to which we belong. But if out of a luxurious vanity we consume the manufactures of our enemies to the detriment of our own trade; if our profusion in extravagant expences render us less able, or less willing to assist the public, we violate the most sacred of all social duties, and become flagrant transgressors of the will of our Creator.

It was such a conduct as this which provoked the anger of God against the Israelites, when he sent his prophet to them with this denunciation; “Woe unto
“them that are at ease in Zion; ye that
“put far away the evil day, and cause
“the seat of violence to come near!
“That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch
“themselves upon their couches; eat
“the lambs out of the flock, and calves
“out of the midst of the stall; that chant
“to the sound of the viol, and invent to
“themselves instruments of music; that
“drink wine out of bowls, and anoint
“themselves with the chief ointments;
“but are not grieved for the affliction of
“Tophet!”

"Joseph!" A beautiful and pathetic description of the levity of the Hebrews; who, at a time of public distress, regarded only the indulgence of voluptuous appetites, but never felt one tender sentiment for their bleeding country, "were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph."

These things were written for our admonition, as well as the Jews; and the woe denounced is equally applicable to any other nation in the like circumstances.

Temperance and patriotism go hand in hand, and adhere together by an inseparable connection. And as there can be no real virtue in that breast, which is not susceptible of the love of the public; so there can be no genuine love of the public, where virtue is wanting; since that is not only the truest ornament, but the best support of the community. National affection therefore, if it be derived from a true principle, must necessarily inspire a moral conduct; must incline us to quit every baneful vice; to contract the circle even of what we call innocent amusements: and instead of looking out for daily parties of pleasure, it will prompt us rather to make a constant festival of hu-

man kindness, the most delicious of all entertainments to a generous mind.

If we behave thus; then we are patriots indeed; then it is we support our constitution! It is thus we are to arm ourselves against our enemies; who, though they should not dread our swords, will certainly stand in awe of our virtue. Whilst we act in this manner, our professions will not only meet with full applause from men, but also with the approbation of God; when with the pious ardor of the text we cry out,

“ If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let
“ my right hand forget her cunning. If
“ I do not remember thee, let my tongue
“ cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I
“ prefer not Jerusalem above my chief
“ joy ! ”

S E R M O N IV.

ON THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF POOR
CHILDREN ;

A CHARITY SERMON.

JOB XXIX. 16.

I was a father to the poor.

THESE words are a summary description of various instances of Job's charity, particularly enumerated in the preceding verses: " When the ear heard
E 3 " me,

“ me, then it blessed me; and when the
 “ eye saw me, it gave witness to me:
 “ because I delivered the poor that cried,
 “ and the fatherless, and him that had
 “ none to help him: the blessing of him
 “ that was ready to perish came upon
 “ me, and I caused the widow’s heart to
 “ sing for joy: I was eyes to the blind,
 “ and feet was I to the lame. I was a fa-
 “ ther to the poor.”

It is impossible within the compass of
 a short discourse, nor is it necessary on
 the present occasion, to expatiate upon
 the several branches of paternal duty:
 it may suffice to consider that part, which
 has a more immediate relation to the bu-
 siness now before us, the instruction and
 education of children. When this point
 has in the first place been briefly discus-
 sed in general, you will permit me, se-
 condly, to apply it more particularly to
 the present occasion.

Naked and unfurnished come we into
 the world, both as to body and mind;
 equally destitute of knowledge for the
 conduct of life, and enable to provide for the
 subsistence of our being. Under this to-
 tal incapacity, were no relief to be ad-
 ministrated, no regard shewn, a poor help-
 less infant, the moment it began to draw
 its

its breath must necessarily expire, and resign it again for ever. Nor is the care and culture of the ignorant, naked mind less requisite, both as to knowledge and moral disposition, than care and provision for the body. Nature and experience proclaim aloud how highly necessary it is to exercise, and improve the infant understanding; to regulate the various appetites and passions, that struggle for superiority with so much force and violence; to restrain the unruly inclinations that arise with great impetuosity in the human mind, and if indulged at their first appearance, gain a strong and lasting influence.

In a case so plain and evident as the nurture and education of children, where parents themselves can discharge the important duty to their own offspring; it will hardly, sure, admit the least shadow of a doubt, whether such children should have their unfurnished minds enlightened and informed; should receive the benefits of good instruction, and be "trained up in the way in which they should go:" or whether their unskilful years should be entirely abandoned to ignorance; their manners and behaviour

left, under a total defect of rational tuition and discipline, to be entirely managed and subdued by the most violent, which will always be the most prevailing inclinations; especially in that stage of life, when humour and fancy are in the strongest periods of their power.

The beneficial effects of a parental concern so just and natural, and the many good fruits of the good seed so seasonably sown, in a soil most proper to receive it, do at once justify, require, and reward this necessary culture: that young and empty minds, which certainly will be furnished and impressed either with bad or good principles, may be improved by knowledge, disposed to virtue, and fortified against the various assaults of vice.

The earlier this care is begun in creatures, whose passions are strongest when their reason and experience are weakest; the more likely it is, from beginning soon, and thus forming, as it were, part of the nature and original constitution, to operate with greater effect; to produce good habits, more lasting and powerful; and to establish, by the power of custom,
justly

justly called a second nature, the most fixed and rooted dispositions to virtue.

Happy would it be for many individuals, for families, and for the public, if the melancholy examples of the want of this due care, where there is no want of fortune to secure it, did not give additional force to the considerations which have been offered, and prove by sad experience how fatal a neglect it is not "to train up a child in the way he should go:" admonishing even those in opulent circumstances, that all the sons of men, however distinguished, and possibly the more for being distinguished, should come under discipline, and "bear the yoke in their youth."

Reason and experience, the maxims of the best and wisest philosophers, the regulations of great and famous lawgivers, and above all, the express commands of the all-wise governor of the world, the father of mankind, to teach our children diligently, and, when it is necessary, not to withhold correction, put this point, as to parents, beyond all reasonable dispute. And indeed, where parents can themselves perform this kind and beneficial, this necessary office, the

most violent invectives against general education, have scarce denied to such parents so useful a branch of their power and their duty.

But in whatever channel necessary instruction be conveyed, the happiness of the child and the benefit of the nation, that are derived from this source, are exactly the same. Every argument therefore, and many powerful arguments there are, for parental care and instruction, pleads as strongly for the care and instruction itself, by whatever pious and generous hand it is bestowed.

Where parents are so negligent, or so unnatural, that they will not discharge this duty; and human laws, through defect or impotence, do not compel the performance of it; or where persons are so poor and indigent, that they cannot procure this blessing to their unfortunate children: happy will it be for them, and happy for the community too, if christian compassion supply this melancholy defect, and administer necessary assistance to the helpless orphans: orphans I may justly call them; for to have no parents, or none who can, or will exert parental care, is in effect the same misfortune. Nor does
such

such useful charity furnish the slenderest excuse for the guilt and cruelty of parents sufficiently able, but wilfully neglecting to discharge a duty so very material to their own offspring.

But to proceed: the desirable instruction for the lowest order of the people, unable to procure instruction for themselves, is of a limited nature, and confined within those bounds which public utility prescribes. It is neither necessary nor expedient to extend the instruction of children in general to those branches, or to that degree of knowledge, which, with respect to the poorer sort, will not only employ too much time in acquiring, but frequently, by raising their thoughts above their condition, swells the mind with conceit, and very truly, in the Apostle's description, "puffeth up."

Instruction and knowledge, of all kinds, are very properly varied and proportioned, according to the station and employment in which different persons are to be engaged. But there are some branches of knowledge universally expedient; the salutary truths of the christian religion, being graciously intended by its blessed

author, for the instruction and comfort of every rational creature.

Hence it is, that the virtuous education, the religious instruction of children in general, poor as well as rich, becomes a manifold blessing and a necessary duty: for what is this instruction, but to furnish and impress uninformed and tender minds with the beneficial though plain and obvious truths of sound religion; to explain and enforce the great duties of universal obligation; to prepare young persons for, and engage them in business; to teach, even the poorest of them, by pains and industry, with the sweat of their brow, in innocence and chearfulness to eat the bread of honest diligence; and by their own hard labour provide for themselves and their dependents, if they grow up into masters of families; in the mean time, faithfully and diligently to discharge the office of servants, with contentment in that state wherein Divine Providence has placed their lot.

Nor can learning the duties of life, suitable to the lowest condition of it, whether this instruction come by the eye or by the ear, by reading or by hearing, in the least disturb the order of society, or
lead

lead the meaner part of a people out of their proper rank and station. The more general this wholesome instruction becomes, the fewer instances of distinguished ignorance will remain; and were it absolutely universal, and no one ignorant person to be found, the distinction would be at an end, and the supposed vanity consequent upon it entirely removed: because there would then be no longer room for men to boast of superior knowledge, or value themselves above their fellows, for an attainment which, like speech, or any other natural qualification, they hold in common with others.

In a country where the charming sound of liberty has such prevailing force, where the happy frame of a free government consists in submission to laws enacted by common consent; to subject any part, even the lowest, of the people to the least inconvenience, or deprive them of any advantage, one degree farther than the general safety or well-being of the community do properly require, seems extremely incongruous, and no better founded in the principles of common humanity, than in the maxims of true religion.

But

But in the case now supposed, of a suitable education, besides the private satisfaction and benefit, of infinite importance, arising to the objects of instruction themselves, public advantage likewise pleads strongly on the favourable side, for that religious instruction, that useful information, which explains and enforces the duties of life, even under the meanest circumstances of it; and directs men of every capacity and character to love and reverence, to fear and to obey the great Creator, Sovereign and Judge of all mankind; to be faithful servants, honest dealers, true and impartial witnesses, good subjects; to be chaste and temperate in their own persons, always to do justice, and within the sphere of their ability, however small that sphere may be, to shew mercy and compassion; even if good wishes should be the extent of their power, at least to wish well, and discover a benevolence to all mankind.

The lower offices and stations of life are, by these means, as humanity and prudence direct, both improved and established: this is not destroying, but confirming that subordination, which public

lic utility certainly requires; it is not leading men out of their rank, but engaging them, from the highest considerations, to discharge the duties of an inferior condition, and maintain their private posts in the lowest character of service.

Education suited to this class of people, it is agreed, should not be contrived to furnish deep erudition, or great skill in the liberal arts or sciences: the nurture of such persons is not intended to embellish the learned world with any pomp of literature; but by due admonition and kindly prepossessions, to give a virtuous turn and bias to their minds: for this purpose, nothing more is requisite than a plain and wholesome method of instructing the children of the poor; children, who without this seasonable relief, must unavoidably bear the misfortune of having no instruction in the principles of religion and virtue; their minds never broken by discipline or accustomed to subjection; but without any preparation for labour, any introduction into business, must stand exposed to all the evils that want and ignorance, and idleness, those fruitful

fruitful sources of evil, most plentifully produce.

But alas! there is too little occasion to rest this matter upon argument and speculation; experience, sad experience, speaks with full, but melancholy conviction.

I will not carry your thoughts to antient times, or distant places, those uncivilised countries where, for want of due instruction, the most savage dispositions and detestable practices, contrary to the principles of humanity as well as true religion, are transmitted down from one wretched generation of ignorant creatures to another; who, for want of knowledge, their shape and voice excepted, scarcely appear to be human. Our own native country affords many, too many, instances of the dismal consequences of ignorant and uninstructed youth. Compare these profligate, youths whose number and bad qualities give so great and just concern to every serious and thinking mind; with children who are brought up under discipline, instructed in their duty, and inured to submission and regularity. Let the most determined enemy of the useful seminaries now under consideration ask himself, which

is most beneficial to the public, or which would soonest be admitted into any private family; a poor, instructed, regular child, or one of those pernicious vagrants, whose very appearance would shut the door of every honest house against them? Let every human breast, let every christian heart determine, into which society a distressed, helpless, I may say, fatherless child, is to be entered; and under what tutors the innocent uncorrupted creature, with all the frailties of human nature about it, shall receive the first and deep impressions, which are to determine the comfortable, or the wretched course of its future life. Could any rational being, could any human mind ever be so abandoned to all sense of virtue and goodness, as to deliver up a poor child, or, which is equally productive of ruin, suffer its helpless, unguarded youth, for want of timely care and instruction, to be united with a crew of profligate wretches "whose mouth is full of cursing and deceit;" from whom it must unavoidably learn idleness and lewdness, theft and rapine, violence, and it may be, murder: rather than place it, like a tender plant, in a situation where it will find secure

cure nourishment, and be seasonably instructed in every virtue, that renders its own life innocent and comfortable, and its neighbour's safe and quiet.

Would to God, the case were as effectually regarded, as it is easily determined, how destitute children should be disposed of; determined from all the maxims of reason and justice; from every consideration of private delight and satisfaction, or public security and advantage; from every suggestion of humanity and compassion, and from every direction and motive of "pure and undefiled religion," which with tender affection visits and relieves the "fatherless and the widow."

Thanks be to the God and Father of mercies, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, that your hearts, my brethren, have been inspired with these humane and christian sentiments. Go on and prosper: may the influence of your laudable example continue to spread far and wide. The cause you have undertaken is the cause of God and of your country; it is the cause of industry, virtue, and religion.

These who are present, and many more
poor

poor children, who, in their turns, have enjoyed the manifold benefits of your prudent and pious care, will hereafter rise up and call you blessed: and I should not do justice to that gratitude which, I doubt not, fills their infant hearts, if I did not, in their name, earnestly implore the father of the fatherless, and the rewarder of the merciful, to shower down upon you and your children the choicest of his blessings.

It is needless, in this audience, to repeat the motives that have been frequently urged for extending a most beneficial compassion to helpless children; and indeed, the tender age, and pitiable condition of these poor, harmless, destitute objects, speak with a much more moving force, than any words can equal. Circumstances so affecting, and of young creatures in that view alone so apt to move our pity, do in a manner extort an affectionate assistance; which to a well turned mind will create a natural and rational, a real and solid pleasure, infinitely superior to every sensual gratification.

Behold such innocent distress, under the sad prospect of a whole life of misery
and

and wickedness ! Suppose as might have been the case had not a kind Providence interposed, that, our own offspring, had been reduced to this unhappy condition, what would our reasonable wishes have suggested ; what should we have desired “ to have been done unto them ? ”

Remember that they are fellow creatures, and brethren to us and our children, upon whom this compassionate regard may derive a blessing :

Reflect upon the duties we owe our country, and the public service that is done by increasing the number of honest, industrious hands :

Recollect the great obligations we are under to our Redeemer, who has graciously appointed these little ones to be his substitutes :

Think how deeply we are indebted to the goodness of our heavenly Father, and how entirely our future happiness depends upon his favour and mercy.

Seriously think on these things and, with pious bounty you will become, what is so justly amiable in the sight of God and man—“ fathers to the poor.”

S E R M O N V.

PUBLIC THANKSGIVING FOR NATIONAL
MERCIES.

PSALM L. 23.

*Whofo offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to
him that ordereth his conversation aright,
will I shew the salvation of God.*

THERE is no nation under heaven,
that has seen more and clearer in-
stances of the interposition of Providence
on their behalf, or has had greater bless-
ings

ings and means of public prosperity put into their hands; than we of this nation have had. As "the mountains are round about Jerusalem," said the Psalmist, "so the Lord is round about his people: as the seas encompass our land, may we no less justly say, even so does the protection of Providence surround us on all sides. We have enjoyed a long and uninterrupted succession of the blessings of Heaven from above, and of the earth beneath; of fruitful seasons, and a large and plentiful increase. We have lived under a secure establishment of all our private rights and just liberties, in a wise and well-constituted government, and in the regular execution of good and wholesome laws. We have had the free exercise of our religion continued to us; surprising deliverances vouchsafed us, and such concurrences of circumstances in our favour, as no human wisdom could either foresee, direct, or over rule. We are not liable to be perpetually spoiled, by the violence of arbitrary power; and to be daily bereaved of our nearest and most valuable rights, at the mere will and pleasure of a lawless oppressor; but under the happy influences

ces of a mild and most auspicious government, and under the protection of wise and good laws, we enjoy as much liberty, as can be desired by any, who aim not at the confusion of unlimited licentiousness.

If these be things, which are the proper subjects of praise and thanksgiving, and call for the heartiest expressions of our gratitude to “him, who redeemeth
“our life from destruction, and crowneth
“us with mercy and loving-kindness;” undoubtedly there is no nation under the sun, that has more reason this day, than we, to say, “what shall we render unto
“the Lord, for all his benefits towards us? We will offer to him
“the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and
“will call upon the name of the Lord.” And O that men would indeed, with their mouths and from their hearts, by the confession of their lips and in the actions of their lives, “therefore praise the
“Lord for his goodness, and declare the
“wonders that he doth for the Children
“of men! That they would exalt him
“also in the congregation of the people,
“and praise him in the assembly of the
“elders!” O that there were in all of us
such

such a heart, that, by making suitable returns of praise and obedience to God, for his past and present benefits; we might show ourselves worthy of the continuance of his favour, and secure for the future the same blessings to ourselves and our posterity! Could we prevail with ourselves, not to abuse that plenty wherewith God has blessed us, by intemperance and debauchery: could we but use that liberty we so justly value and boast of, so as not to abuse it to licentiousness and wantonness: could we but in any measure persuade ourselves to practise the religion, we are so zealous to profess; and banish from a Christian and a reformed nation, infidelity, profaneness, and immorality: in a word, could we but find in our hearts to glorify God worthily for his great mercies, and offer him praises suitable to the wonderful works which he has done for us; that is, praises accompanied with the works of righteousness, so as to honour him indeed; this would be truly such an ordering our conversation aright, that we might with good grounds hope to have the promises in the text fulfilled upon ourselves; and by the continuance of the same, and the
addition

addition of more blessings, might see compleated in us “ the salvation of God. “ Whofo offereth praise, glorifieth me; “ and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation “ of God.”

These words instruct us, in the first place, that God is to be glorified or honoured in all our actions. This is implied in those words, “ he glorifieth me :” for the declaring in what manner, or by what actions God is most glorified; and who the persons are that do most truly honour him; is presupposing the knowledge and obligation of the duty itself that “ God is to be glorified or honoured in all our actions :” that is, that we are at all times, and in all places to have a constant regard to him, and dependence upon him, to have a perpetual sense of him upon our minds, and to make continual acknowledgments to him upon all proper occasions, that he is the author and preserver of our life and being; that on him we rely, for all the good things we hope for; and by his permission, by his grace and favour, enjoy whatever good we at present possess; that to him all possible praise and thanksgiving is

due, for the prosperity or success we at any time meet with, either in private or in public affairs; that by him kings reign, and princes decree justice; that it is owing to his blessing on a nation, whenever pious princes are established upon the throne, and their affairs prosper under a wise administration, and success accompanies their arms abroad, and peace and plenty crown their endeavours at home: on the contrary, that ill success in any of our undertakings; the blasting and defeating any of our designs; the calamities and afflictions, of whatever kind they be, that at any time fall upon us; are still the strokes of the same hand, the appointment of the same wise Providence, the good pleasure of the same Supreme Governour and Director of all things; designed for our correction and improvement, to withdraw our affections from vanity and trust in the world, and to lead us to repentance and amendment: this is, according to the wise man's advice, "acknowledging God in all our ways:" this is promoting a true sense of religion and piety in the world: this is honouring and glorifying God. For the glory of God, is not any thing accruing to God him-

himself; it is not any addition to his greatness or happiness, or any accession to the perfections of his nature: but as the true glory of a prince, is the obedience and the prosperity of his subjects; so the true notion of the glory of God, is nothing else but the advancing and establishing his kingdom among men; and the kingdom of God, saith St. Paul, "is, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost:" it is something within ourselves, as our Saviour affirms: it is the conformity of the creatures to the nature and life of God, to the law and happiness of heaven, by the obedience of the gospel, and by the reconciliation of their nature to the eternal and unchangeable law of righteousness and holiness. Promoting the glory of God therefore, is nothing else but advancing the interest of true religion and promoting the practice of virtue in the world. For, as irreligion and neglect of God, profaneness or any vicious practice, in those who pretend to believe; do (as is said in the case of David) "give great occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme;" and they who "make their boast in the law," as St. Paul expresses

it, do, “ by transgressing the law, dishonour God; and the name of God is “ through them blasphemed among unbelievers:” so, on the contrary, they who by unfeigned piety and regard to God in the whole course of their lives, make “ their light to shine before men;” do by letting others “ see their good “ works, cause men to glorify their Father which is in heaven; ” that is, they bring other men over to a true sense of religion, and persuade them to have a just value and esteem for it. This is the true notion of the glory of God. This is doing all things for his honour and glory. And in this sense it is manifest it is our indispensable duty, to honour and glorify God in all our actions; by keeping up in our minds a constant sense of him, of his power and greatness, of his wisdom and providence in governing the world and disposing of all events; and as much as in us lies, exciting the the same sense of him, and dependence upon him, in the minds of others likewise.

And as God is in some measure to be honoured or glorified by all our actions in general; so more particularly, upon occasion of any great mercy or deliverance,
upon

upon occasion of any remarkable blessing or signal interposition of Providence on our behalf, ought we to show forth his glory by the most public acknowledgments, by the highest expressions of our gratitude, be the heartiest “praises and thanksgivings to him. Whoso offereth praise, “glorifieth me;” or, as it is in the former translation, “whoso offereth me thanks and praise, he honoureth me.” This is all the return, that weak and dependent creatures are capable of making, to the Supreme Lord and governor of all things; and therefore he is graciously pleased to accept it, as a sufficient “reward for all the benefits that he hath “done unto us. Our goodness extendeth not to him;” neither “can man “be profitable to God, as he that is wise “may be profitable unto himself.” But though we cannot make him any return for his benefits, yet thankful to him for them we can be; and most inexcusable are we, if we neglect to be so. All that we are able to do, is to make humble acknowledgements of the mercies we receive from him; and therefore we ought to do it in the most grateful, and in the most public and hearty manner we can.

Adversity and afflictions, such corrections and chastisements as his fatherly hand thinks fit at any time to lay upon us, it becomes us to bear with patient submission, and silent resignation to his will; as being just reproofs for our sins, and calls to reformation and repentance: but blessings and instances of mercy, especially public and national blessings, call for public acknowledgments in such expressions of praise and gratitude, as may declare to the world our being duly sensible from what hand they come. Upon account of the works of creation, all, even inanimate creatures, are in scripture called upon to praise the Lord; that is, to contribute matter, and afford perpetual occasion by the meditation of them, to all rational creatures to sing his praises; "praise him," (that is, afford continual subject matter for his praises) "O ye sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light." (The works of Providence, are no less great and conspicuous, than those of creation; and for these works, men who are chiefly and most immediately concerned in them, and who alone are able to discern and judge of them, are in scripture required perpetually to praise him: to praise him
perpe-

perpetually, because the number and variety of them is so great, that no tongue can worthily or sufficiently extol them. “Who can express the noble acts
“ of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise?”

It is the least that any reasonable person can do, in return for great benefits; to make a thankful acknowledgment of them, to him from whom he received them. And yet because it is all (as I before observed) that weak and dependent creatures can pay to him who is absolute Lord of all things; therefore, when it proceeds from a sincere mind and hearty affection, it is accepted by him as the most valuable sacrifice. “I will take no bullock, saith God, out
“ of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy
“ folds. For every beast of the forrest
“ is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand
“ hills. Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
“ or drink the blood of goats? Offer
“ unto God thanksgiving, and pay
“ thy vows unto the most high; and
“ call upon me in the day of trouble; I
“ will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify
“ me. What shall I render unto the
“ Lord, for all his benefits towards me?

“ I will offer to thee the sacrifice of
“ thanksgiving, and will call upon the
“ name of the Lord. And I will praise
“ the name of God with a song, and will
“ magnify him with thanksgiving. This
“ also shall please the Lord better than
“ an ox, or bullock, that hath horns and
“ hoofs.”

The obligation to this duty, is so evident and so reasonable, that it is sometimes in scripture put for the whole of religion: and the neglect of it, marked as a total defection from God. Thus St. Paul, describing the inexcusable corruption of the Heathen world, puts it principally upon this; “ because that when they
“ knew God, they glorified him not as
“ God, neither were thankful, but be-
“ came vain in their imaginations, and
“ their foolish heart was darkened.” They could not but know God, by his works; yet they were not thankful, nor glorified him according to that knowledge; therefore, says the Apostle, they are without excuse. The plainer and more obvious the duty is, and the more fully God has declared his acceptance of it, to us who enjoy the advantage of revelation; the more unworthy still, and the

the more inexcusable, is unthankfulness and neglect of him. It is the perpetual complaint of the prophets in the Old Testament, that after all the great things that God had done for the nation of the Jews, their ingratitude was most provoking to him; "he made them ride on the high places of the earth, that they might eat the increase of the fields, and suck honey out of the rock, and oyl out of the flinty rock: but they soon forgot the God which made them, and lightly esteemed the rock of their salvation." And it is recorded of a great and good king; one of whom the scripture testifies, that in other things he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," so that before him there was none equal to him, neither after him arose there any like him, it is noted of him, even of good king Hezekiah, as a very great blemish, as a thing very unnatural and unbecoming him, and at which God was highly displeased; that, after the Lord had destroyed his enemies, by sending an angel which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains of the camp of the king of Assyria;" and after he had

miraculously caused him to recover from a mortal disease; yet he “rendred not
“again according to the benefit done
“unto him; for his heart was lifted up;
“therefore there was wrath upon him,
“and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

The blessings which Heaven hath bestowed on these nations, and for which we are now met together to return him thanks; are such as will set as great or greater mark of ingratitude upon us, if our real thankfulness be not answerable to our outward expressions of joy, and our consequent behaviour suitable to both.

For these mercies let us then make thankful acknowledgments to his Divine Majesty, in the words of David,
“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and
“the power, and the glory, and the
“victory, and the majesty; for all that is
“in the heaven, and in the earth, is
“thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord,
“and thou art exalted as head above
“all: both riches and honour come of
“thee, and thou reignest over all, and in
“thine hand is power and might, and
“in thine hand it is to make great, and to
“give strength unto all: now therefore
“our

“our God, we thank thee, and praise
“thy glorious name.”

He that will return thanks to God acceptably for past mercies, so as to glorify him indeed, must for the future live suitably to that profession he pretends to make, of his sense of God's providence in governing the world, and of his entire and constant dependence upon it. The expressions of our present joy, must be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ; and the following part of our lives must show, that our praises proceed not out of feigned lips. Public praises and thanksgivings are acceptable to God, as part of our religious worship and adoration of him; but they are then only so, when the declarations of our mouths are the real significations of the intentions of our hearts, and our designs are not to abuse those mercies which we thank him for. We must so return our thanks for past mercies, as that, by their having a due influence upon us, we may show ourselves worthy of the continuance of them, and of God's bestowing still more upon us; and then our praise will be indeed an acceptable sacrifice. “Rejoice in the
F 6 Lord,

“Lord, ye righteous, saith the Psalmist, “for it becometh well the just to be “thankful.” But for the wicked it may truly be affirmed, that as their prayer, so their praise also “is an abomination to the Lord.”

To those who thus “order their conversation aright,” here is a promise added of yet farther blessings: “I will shew them the salvation of God.” They who worthily express their thanks for past mercies, not by debauched and unseemly mirth, but by truly honouring and fearing God, may reasonably hope for more occasions of praising him. “If “ye be willing and obedient, ye shall “eat the good of the land; and the Lord “will delight to do you good.”

If we would show ourselves truly thankful for our past mercies, and secure the national happiness for time to come, let us heartily endeavour to promote the interests of the community to which we belong. Let us contribute our utmost, each in our proper stations to support a government so happily established; and to make the executive part of it easy, and as little burdensome as possible, in the hands wherein it is lodged. “To seek

seek the peace of the city " or country wherein we dwell, and in " the peace thereof " to expect peace, is often men's duty and interest, even under bad governments : how much more, under a government wherein nothing else is designed but the preserving the public welfare and happiness, the security and establishment of the protestant religion, the maintaining the rights and liberties both of nations and private persons.

Let us moreover take great heed, lest by running into lawless and ungovernable licentiousness, we abuse and destroy those rights and liberties, which have been long so earnestly and so justly contended for ; let us not become enemies to ourselves, by a licentiousness impatient of the most necessary restraints ; lest by our own unthankfulness and intestine confusions, we deprive ourselves of our most valuable enjoyments, and provoke God to suffer us to destroy ourselves, by losing our liberty wholly, while we affect more of it than is just and reasonable, or consistent with good order and government and the public safety. For as, on the one hand, the abuse of arbitrary power in governors, has generally been the occasion

caſion of putting people upon recovering the liberties they had loſt; ſo, on the other hand, licentiousneſs or abuſe of liberty in the people, tends always to ſuch confuſion, as terminates uſually in arbitrary power again.

— And above all, let us take care to praſtiſe the religion we profeſs, and for the preſervation whereof we are ſo highly concerned. One of the principal benefits ariſing from our national proſperity, is the ſecuring the reformed religion amongſt us, againſt the attempts of popiſh ſuperſtition: but what will it profit us, to bear the name and profeſſion of a reformed religion, if in our praſtice and in reality we have no religion at all? Of what uſe will it be to us, to be ſecured from the vanities and ſuperſtitions of popery; if on the contrary we run into irreligion and prophaneneſs?

Chriſtianity itſelf, our Saviour aſſures us, is of no advantage to thoſe who do not obey “the will of his Father which is in heaven;” but their portion will be among unbelievers. In like manner neither can any particular “reformation of religion” from the groſſeſt corruptions that have crept into it, be of any benefit

to

to those, whose manners are not reformed together with their profession.

God, “ who commanded the light to “ shine out of darkness,” grant that “ the “ light of the glorious gospel of Christ, “ who is the image of God,” may “ so shine in our hearts,” as that we may bring forth fruit worthy of that “ light “ of the knowledge of the glory of God, “ in the face of Jesus Christ.”

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This is a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf of a book. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some faint smudges and discoloration, characteristic of old paper. The left edge shows the binding of the book.

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S E R M O N VI.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS
TRUTH AND CIVIL FREEDOM.

FOR THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

JOHN VIII. 32.

*We shall know the truth, and the truth shall
make you free.*

TO those who consider this divine
passage of our Saviour, it must
needs appear strange, that his heavenly
doctrines should ever be perverted into
a fanc-

a sanctuary for ignorance and oppression. Were not this known to be fact, we might with reason believe it impossible, that superstition should claim protection from that Gospel which assures us "we shall know the truth;" that tyranny should pretend a commission from the same Gospel, which assures us, that "the truth shall make us free!"

This observation, however, suggests to us a plain account of the motives of that church which deprives its members of the use of Holy Scripture; and proves, that although its leaders are not masters of true wisdom, they are at least great proficient in false. They are conscious there is such a natural connexion between truth and freedom, that the one cannot subsist, but the other will arise: they know that ignorance and slavery are so powerfully united, that the most effectual way to support the one, is to establish the other.

But as they are not very forward to explain themselves on this subject, it may not be improper upon this occasion, to represent it in its true light. I shall therefore in the following discourse consider,

The

The strong and necessary connection between superstition and tyranny: and the no less mutual connection between religious truth and civil freedom: after which I shall make some observations arising from these principles.

Let us first consider the connection between superstition and tyranny.

If we regard the grosser kinds and more active principles of superstition, as they affect the rulers of mankind, we shall plainly perceive their tendency towards every kind of tyranny and oppression. Our ideas of perfection are drawn from what we believe of the Supreme Being: and as vice, evil passions, and cruelty, are the vile materials of which the superstitious man compounds his God, so his opinions and his actions which regard either himself or mankind, must be suitable to this absurd system of belief. Hence then we may discover the fatal effects of superstition with respect to government. The prince or magistrate, thus under the dominion of error, mistakes deformity for divine perfection, and copies it: as he is generally complimented with the high title of the Almighty's

mighty's vicegerent, he transfers all the monstrous visions of his brain into real practice, and acts the most palpable absurdities under the influence of a misguided imitation. Is the God he hath figured to himself, of a suspicious or implacable nature? what can more effectually lead him to every gratification of jealousy and revenge? Does he form to himself a Deity partial to a few, a respecter of persons, dispensing his rewards and punishments without regard to the merits or demerits of mankind? what can more violently tend to form and fix in his breast an iniquitous and blood-thirsty temper; to destroy all the impressions of equity which he may have had from God and nature? Does he cloathe his Deity in vanity and caprice? does he paint him in his imagination as fond of an ill-grounded praise, as building his glory on the destruction of his creatures? what can more certainly effect the utter extirpation of every social virtue? what can more certainly blow up his pride into madness, extinguish pity, light up a false and dreadful ambition, and lead him to the pursuit of an imaginary glory,

on

on the ruins of all that is praise-worthy and good?

Thus we see in what manner superstition stands connected with the exercise of tyranny; but its operations would by no means be compleat, did it not qualify the minds of men to receive the yoke which it had thus prepared for them.

That mankind in their natural state are fond of liberty, scarce needs a particular proof: that wholesome food and warm cloathing are preferable to rags and hunger, is evident to any one in possession of his senses. On this account tyranny and usurpation can never thoroughly extinguish these dictates of common apprehension, till they have called in superstition to their aid. This powerful enchantress can indeed in one sense work miracles and lying wonders, can dress up sordid fear and slavery in the garb of rightful obedience, can exhibit the most diabolical tyranny under the appearance of divine right, can transform cowardice into virtue, the love of freedom into treason, can lock up the senses, and annihilate the understanding, can reduce her votaries to the abject condition of the idol they adore, "which hath ears but
cannot

cannot hear, and eyes but cannot see," can impose the dreams of bigots for the illuminations of truth, and the forgeries of knaves for the commands of Heaven. Thus dreadfully does superstition work when admitted into the heart of man; and hence becomes the most effectual engine in the hands of tyranny. The activity of the human mind does naturally repel the impositions of outward force: but when thought itself is subdued, and shackles laid upon the understanding, then it is that all possibility of resistance vanisheth; then it is that tyranny reigns without controul, and perpetrates the most horrid absurdities, not only with impunity but applause.

And as superstition is thus favourable to tyranny, so if we invert the proposition, we shall find that tyranny when established is no less favourable to superstition.

It is the interest of a vicious and cruel tyrant, to be persuaded, if possible, that his God is like himself: and whatever we ardently desire to believe, that too easily wins its way to the heart. The selfish passions of men, whatever clear conviction they may require in order to
their

their restraint, need none such in order to their encouragement: they are ingenious in finding out reasons in their own favour; and the lightest pretence, when seconded by inclination, is often too strong for the strongest proofs, when opposed by the natural eloquence of the passions. Hence, whatever notions of a God can make a tyrant easy under his confirmed crimes, will be greedily sought after and embraced: he will industriously view his Creator's image in the deformed mirror of superstition, because he dares not behold it in that of truth.

Thus tyranny gives a bias towards superstition on the part of a prince; and, on the slightest examination it will appear that slavery has the same tendency on the part of the people. Where arbitrary will takes place, ignorance is its best security: all knowledge is dangerous, is fatal, as it opens the eyes of the deluded multitude, shews them their own wretchedness, and points out the easy methods of redress. Hence in the dominions of tyranny, ignorance is kept up and fenced as a main pillar of state. Now, it is clear beyond a doubt, that ignorance is the great parent of credulity
and

and superstition : wonder, though it be really the seed of knowledge, yet derives its original from the want of it : where this natural principle of wonder is cherished by freedom, it shoots up and opens into knowledge ; but where checked by the ill influence of tyranny, it degenerates into ignorance confirmed. The soul thus forbid to take its full range, is subdued into fear and cowardice ; every thing unaccountable is regarded as supernatural and divine : strange and groundless apprehensions of things unknown, depress all the noble faculties of the mind, and prepare it to receive with the most abject submission the tricks and legends of imposture.

Thus we have a full view of the connection between tyranny and superstition, and of the firm and mutual support which they communicate to each other. Let us now turn to the brighter side of human nature, and consider religious truth and civil freedom, between which we shall find a like connection and support no less reciprocal and strong.

It was the opinion of a celebrated ancient, that the firmament, with all its furniture of stars revolving in the most perfect

perfect order and magnificence, was presented by the Supreme Being to the eyes of mortals, on purpose that, by viewing the regularity of this glorious train, they might be moved to transcribe its beauty into their own life and morals. And surely we may thus far subscribe to this opinion, that the man who entertains a just idea of the divine nature, who reads his perfections in his word and works, hath the noblest and most engaging model for his imitation. More particularly the rulers of mankind, who are or ought to be the representatives of heaven, have the most lively and persuasive lesson in the works of God: there not is the least circumstance in creation, but what instructs them to be just and merciful: here they behold power directed to the ends of wisdom; and both power and wisdom subservient to the ends of goodness: they see the King of kings shine forth in continued acts of beneficence; and may be convinced, that he never exerciseth his might but to diffuse his bounty. A noble pattern! which cannot fail to influence where there is the least degree of reflection, which if properly attended to, cannot fail to render a prince just, and a people happy!

The effects of religious truth on the minds and passions of a people are no less favourable to liberty. A just sense of the condition and dignity of man, of the rank which he bears in creation, the knowledge of God's goodness and perfections, of his hatred to injustice and oppression, all these elevate the human soul, and raise it to a love of freedom: not of that licentiousness which is the offspring of vice, but that true greatness of mind which is the parent of every virtue. It is this extended view of things, which drives every partial and ungenerous thought from the breasts of mankind; and inspires them with that modest pride, that noble humility, which expects indeed and even demands the possession of its own rights, but is equally zealous in securing the rights of others.

Thus favourable is religious truth to civil liberty, which in its turn becomes no less the support of religious truth. Indeed not only the perfection, but the very being of religious truth depends on the exercise of freedom. Whatever some may fear from an open and unlimited inquiry, it seems evidently the only means

means God hath vouchsafed us for the attainment of truth. The abuse of it may be dangerous, but the want of it is fatal: without this, opinion degenerates into absurdity, as a field runs to weeds without a proper cultivation. Such are the undoubted principles of the Gospel, where we are commanded to prove all things and hold fast that which is good; where we are not only allowed, but required to be able to give a reason for the faith and the hope that is in us. This principle is consonant with the strictest reason. It is falshood only that loves and retires into darkness: truth delights in the day, and demands no more than a just and a strong light, to appear in perfect beauty. A rigid examination is its only test: for we know by experience, that even obstinacy and error can endure the fires of persecution; but it is genuine truth, and that alone, which comes out pure and unchanged from the severer tortures of debate.

The connection between religious truth and civil freedom being thus apparent, let me now in conclusion add a few observations, such as may naturally arise from

this subject, and suits the present occasion.

From these principles we may, in many cases, gain a clear and certain criterion of religious truth and falsehood. Our Saviour hath told us, that the truth "shall make us free:" therefore whatever opinions are advanced as truth, if they tend to the establishment of tyranny, we may be assured they are falsehood in disguise. Hence we may gain no inconsiderable evidence against the essential tenets of the church of Rome, as they are known in fact, wherever they prevail, to be the common instruments of oppression. To enumerate these, would at present be a task too laborious; a general idea is given of them under the first division of this discourse: let it suffice therefore to observe here, that as the head of that church is the great enemy of truth and freedom, the great patron of tyranny and falsehood, he may at least in a secondary and figurative sense be justly accounted Antichrist.

From the connection which subsists between superstition and tyranny, we may be warned against the specious pretences of both. Does the papist profess
only

only to impose his tenets, while he pretends to be the advocate for freedom? If he be sincere, convince him of his mistake; if artful, resist his sophistry; for he is at that very instant pleading the cause, and preparing the chains of tyranny. On the other hand, does the slavish advocate for hereditary unalienable right declare his zeal for true religion? he is either blind or faithless; for his sole interest and hope lies in the propagation of ignorance and falsehood.

From the mutual connection between religious truth and civil freedom we may observe, that the views which true Christianity opens to the mind of man, are a surer and nobler foundation of liberty, than any the ancient Heathens were ever possessed of; even as far as obligation is superior to impulse, and principle to passion: they give mankind a juster and more enlarged conception of each other's rights, than what unassisted reason could ever produce, even in the most polite and enlightened ages. For, amidst all the triumphs of liberty in Greece and Rome, we know, that although many had a strange passion for, yet few had consistent notions of freedom. The most un-

just conquests over peaceable nations, the most barbarous treatment of all who opposed the progress of their arms, were not only allowed as innocent, but boasted of as glorious. Cities were ruined, provinces plundered, and whole kingdoms laid in ashes, through an absurd and enthusiastic love of their country; a principle no better in many of its consequences, than the most cruel and furious bigotry. Even among themselves a whole race of unhappy people, and innocent children, were destined to a severe and endless slavery, robbed of all the natural rights of men, their life only excepted, and that too at the disposal of an arbitrary master. Thus liberty seemed no more with them than the casual conduct of high spirit, often of pride and revenge, seldom or never the result of rational opinion: they were so meanly fond of monopolizing it themselves, that they snatched every opportunity of wresting it from others: aspiring to the name of heroes, they fell below the character of men; and while they professed to tread in the paths of true greatness, were notoriously false to the rules of common equity. How different are the sentiments which christianity inspires!

spires ! This teacheth us, that the laws of justice and charity ought to extend to all denominations of men ; that the rich and poor meet together for each other's good ; that the Lord is the Maker of them all ; that although our first and principal cares ought to be fixed on those who are most closely related to us by the ties of blood, friendship, and society, yet that no exclusive regards must prevail, but our benevolence, and (as far as in us lies) our beneficence extend to the whole race of mankind : in a word, that we must be burning and shining lights, shedding our kindly influences on all around us, according to that just proportion which their respective distances may demand.

Since therefore, my brethren, we are happily possessed of truth and freedom, let us use them as we ought. If they have not their proper effect on our lives and manners, if they do not produce in us a suitable advancement in piety and virtue, it were even scandalous to boast that we enjoy the benefit of them. Let me add, that the proper use and application of these benefits, are the only means by which we can hope for their conti-

nuance among us. If private vice strikes at the foundation, the grand fabric of our constitution must inevitably fall, and leave us an easy prey to the future attempts of tyranny and superstition. Let these considerations, therefore, determine us to be steady in our obedience to the dictates of divine truth, and temperate in the enjoyment of true liberty : that the knowledge of pure religion may render us wise and good, and that in the possession of our just rights we may be free, yet not using our liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of that God, whose service is perfect freedom.

S E R M O N VII.

THE CHARACTER OF A GOOD MAGISTRATE :

PREACHED AT THE ELECTION OF THE LORD MAYOR.

JOB XXIX. 14.

*I put on righteousness, and it cloathed me;
my judgment was as a robe, and a
diadem.*

JOB's reflections on the flourishing
estate he had once enjoyed, did at
the same time afflict, and encourage him.
Doubtless it increased the smart of his
G 5 present

present sufferings, to compare them with his former happiness: and yet a remembrance of the good use he had made of prosperity, contributed to support his mind under the heavy weight of adversity which then lay upon him. He had been a person, not only of great opulence, but authority; a chief magistrate in the place where he dwelt; as appears from several passages in the book which bears his name: and he had, it seems, executed that high office justly and honourably; with great satisfaction to himself, and with the universal applause of his country. To this consideration therefore he retreats, in the midst of all his pressures, with comfort and confidence; in this thought, notwithstanding the sad afflictions, with which he was overwhelmed, he mightily exults and triumphs. For hear how he expresses himself on this occasion, in the verses next to that of the text: "I delivered the poor that cried," says he; "the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I
" was

“ was a father to the poor, and the cause
 “ which I knew not, I searched out : and
 “ I brake the jaws of the wicked, and
 “ plucked the spoil out of his teeth.” One
 would imagine these to be the expressions
 of a man, blessed with ease, and affluence,
 and power ; not of one, who had been just
 stripped of all those advantages, and plunged
 in the deepest miseries, and was now sitting
 naked, upon a dunghill ! But the spirit of a
 man will sustain his infirmities ; the conscious-
 ness of integrity, the sense of a life spent in
 doing good, will enable a man to bear up
 under any change of circumstances ; and,
 whatever his outward condition may be,
 is such an inward spring of contentment
 and pleasure, as cannot fail. This was
 that, which not only armed the mind of
 Job with firmness and fortitude, but filled
 it also with those pleasing reflections,
 which the words I have read to you contain.
 Therein he particularly mentions, and
 values himself upon, the compassion, and
 readiness, and zeal, with which he had
 applied himself to relieve the injured and
 afflicted ; the impartiality he had observed,
 the great diligence he had used, and the
 fearless courage he had shewn,

in the administration of justice: he adds also, in the words of the text; "I put on righteousness, and it cloathed me; my judgment was as a robe, and a diadem;" that is, my chief delight, my greatest honour, and happiness lay in thus discharging the duties of my station; so that, in comparison of it, I undervalued all the ensigns of authority which belonged to me, all the pomp and splendor of life with which I was surrounded.

The words therefore will afford us a proper occasion of considering what a public blessing a good magistrate is: for it is on this supposition that the reflections, which Job here makes to his own comfort and advantage, are built.

The virtues of private persons, how bright and exemplary soever, operate but on few; on those only who are near enough to observe, and inclined to imitate them: their sphere of action is narrow, and their influence is confined to it. But a just and wise magistrate, is a blessing as extensive as the community to which he belongs; a blessing, which includes all other blessings whatsoever, that relate to this life; secures to us the possession, and enhances the value of all of them;

them; which renders the condition of the the happiest among men still more happy, and the state of the meanest less miserable, than it would otherwise be: and for the enjoyment of which no one man can well envy another: because all men in their several ranks, and according to their several proportions and degrees, do alike share in it. The benefits which a good ruler bestows, descend from him, as the head, and are gently diffused over the whole body which he governs, refreshing every part of it, as they descend, from the highest to the lowest.

The benefits of a just and good government to those who are so happy as to be under it, like health to vigorous bodies, or fruitful seasons in temperate climes, are such common and familiar blessings, that they are seldom either valued or relished as they ought to be. We sleep over our happiness, great as it is, and want to be roused into a quick and thankful sense of it, either by an actual change of circumstances, or by a comparison of our own case with that of other men.

Few

Few of us consider, how much we are indebted to government itself, because few of us can, or do represent to ourselves in lively colours, how wretched the condition of mankind would, and must be without it; how to *that* we owe, not only the safety of our persons, and the security of our possessions, but our improvement in the several arts and advantages of civil life, and in all knowledge, both human and divine; even in the knowledge of the blessed nature, and will of God himself, and of the best ways of serving, honouring, and adoring him. We, who are used to see men acting under the awe of civil justice, cannot readily conceive what wild and savage creatures they would be without it; and how much beholden therefore, we are to that wise contrivance, which makes use of our fear to quell our other passions and lusts, as beasts and birds of prey are employed to hunt down those of their kind. The inconveniences attending all, even the best of governments, we quickly see, and feel, and are nicely sensible of the share that we bear in them; and, though these be little in comparison of those mighty advantages

vantages that redound to us from thence, yet we muse so much on the one, that we are apt altogether to overlook and forget the other.

We may farther observe from the text, that there is a propriety in those outward marks of distinction and splendor which are allotted to the magistrate, and which the robe and diadem, expressly here mentioned by Job, may be supposed to comprehend.

The practice of all ages, and all countries (whether christian, or heathen, polite, or barbarous) hath been, in this manner to do honour to those, who are invested with public authority. The reasons are obvious; I shall mention some of them. It was intended by this means,

First, to excite the magistrate to a due degree of vigilance, and concern for the public good: that he, being conscious of the true end for which these encouragements were given, might study by all possible ways to deserve them; and to excel the rest of mankind as much in worthy deeds and achievements, as he outshines them in all other advantages. The honours, and the burdens of great
posts

posts and employments, as they were joined together at the first, so were they designed never to be separated. The magistrate was not made great, in order to afford him opportunities of indulging himself in sloth and vice; but in order to inspire him with resolutions of living suitably to his high profession and calling; that "whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," he might be induced to "think on these things," and to abound in the practice of them.

A second reason of these marks of state and dignity, which are annexed to magistracy, is, for the security of the magistrate's person, in which the public tranquillity and safety are always involved. He who will faithfully perform his duty, in a station of great trust and power, must needs incur the utter enmity of many, and the high displeasure of more; he must sometimes struggle with the passions and interests, resist the applications, and even punish the vices of men potent in the commonwealth, who will employ
their

their ill-gotten influence towards procuring impunity, or extorting undue favours, for themselves, or their dependents. He must conquer all these difficulties, and remove all these hindrances out of the way that leads to justice; must dare even to "break the jaws of the wicked, and to pluck the spoil out of his teeth;" that is, to ravish the prey from any mighty oppressor, when he hath seized, and is just ready to devour it. He is the guardian of the public quiet; appointed to restrain violence, to quell seditions and tumults, and to preserve that order and peace which preserves the world. It is apparent, on these, and many other accounts, what hazards a good magistrate runs; and therefore the retinue of state which belongs to him, is such, as may at the same time be his ornament and defence: the public justly screening him from the dangers which he is to incur for the sake of it.

A third plain reason of the public honours done to the magistrate, is, that he may not only be secure, but had also in due estimation and reverence by all those
who

who are subject to him. It is by respect and distance that authority is upheld; and it is by the outward marks and ensigns of honour that respect is secured, especially from vulgar minds, which do not enter into the true reason of things, but are governed by appearances. It is in the civil government, as in the offices of religion; which, were they stripped of all the external decencies of worship, would not make a due impression on the minds of those who assist at them. In like manner, the solemnities that encompass the magistrate, add dignity to all his actions, and weight to all his words and opinions; producing such effects, as Job, in the chapter from whence the text is taken, hath thus elegantly described; "When I went out," says he, "to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street; the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the aged arose and stood up: unto me men gave ear and waited, and kept silence at my counsel; after my words they spake not again, and my speech dropped upon them: and they waited for me, as for the rain, and opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain."

Finally;

Finally; These external marks of honour are therefore appropriated to the magistrate, that he might be incited from thence to reverence himself. For he who reverences himself will not fail to take the truest methods towards procuring esteem and reverence from others: he will exercise himself with pleasure, and without weariness, in that godlike employment of doing good, which is assigned him; and by reason of which even the title of a god is in Scripture bestowed on him; he will do nothing that is beneath his high station, nor omit doing any thing which becomes it: he will not prostitute his power to mean and undue ends; nor stoop to little and low arts of courting the favour of the people, without doing them real service: he will stand his ground against all the attacks that can be made upon his probity; no man's power shall scare him from doing his duty, no man's importunities shall weary him, no man's flattery shall bribe him, no by-views of his own shall mislead him: he will arm himself perfectly in his integrity: "righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." He will
know

know how to prize his advantages, and to relish the honours which he enjoys, as they are the testimonies of public esteem, and the rewards of merit: but he will not so far please himself with them, as to forget that the chief honour of the magistrate consists, in maintaining the dignity of his character by suitable actions, and in discharging the high trust that is reposed in him, with integrity, wisdom and courage.

Some magistrates are contented that their places should adorn them: and some also there are, who study to adorn their places, and reflect back again the lustre they receive from thence; so that we may apply to them what was said of Simon the son of Onias, that “when he
“put on the robe of honour, and was
“cloathed with the perfection of glory
“he made the garment of holiness ho-
“nourable.”

✓ To be very desirous of a good name and very careful to do every thing that we innocently and prudently may, to obtain it, is so far from being a fault, even in private persons, that it is their great and indispensable duty; but magistrates and ministers of justice are in a peculiar

peculiar manner obliged to it: for they have more opportunities than other men have, of purchasing public esteem by deserving well of mankind; and such opportunities always infer obligations.

Reputation is the great engine, by which those who are possessed of power must make that power serviceable to the ends and uses of government. The rods and axes of princes, and their deputies, may awe many into obedience; but the fame of their goodness, and justice, and other virtues, will work on more; will make men not only obedient, but willing to obey, and ready to come into every thing that is done, or designed, for the public advantage, by those who, they are satisfied, sincerely mean it.

An established character spreads the influence of such as move in a high sphere, on all around, and beneath them; it reaches farther than their own care and providence, or that of their inferior officers can possibly do: it acts for them, when they themselves cease to act, and renders their administration both prosperous and easy.

Besides, the actions of men in high stations are all conspicuous, and liable to

to be scanned and sifted. They cannot hide themselves from the eyes of the world, as private men can: even those who attend on their state and dignity, and make up their honourable train, are, as it were, so many spies, placed upon them by the public, to observe them nearly, and report their character. Praise, therefore, or blame, being the necessary consequence of every thing they do, they have more reason to act always with an immediate regard to the opinion of the world, than other men have; and to resolve to make all those actions worthy of observation, which are sure to be observed.

Great places are never well filled, but by great minds; and it is as natural to a great mind to seek honour by a due discharge of an high trust, as it is to little men to make less advantages of it.

On all these accounts, reputation becomes a signal, a very peculiar blessing to magistrates; and their pursuit of it is not only allowable, but laudable: so it be carried on by methods which are every way innocent and justifiable, and with a view of making a good use of a good character when established; so that this
be

be not rested in, as an end, but only employed as a means of doing still farther good, and as an encouragement to proceed in doing it: in a word, so honour be not sought after by the violation of conscience, or the praise of men preferred, in any respect, to the praise of God.

Now, though all the several branches of the magistrate's duty, when faithfully performed, and all those good qualifications of mind, which enable him to perform it, do, in some degree or other, tend to create a public esteem of him; yet there are some points of duty, some qualifications, that have a more direct and immediate influence to this purpose: they are such as follow.

A good magistrate, who would endear himself to those whom he governs, must, above all things, be endued with a public spirit, that is, with such an excellent temper of mind, as sets him loose from all narrow selfish views, and makes him bend all his thoughts and endeavours towards promoting the common good of the society which is committed to his care. The welfare of that is the chief point which he is to carry always in his eye,

eye, and by which he is to govern all his counsels, designs, and actions; directing his zeal against, or for persons and things, in proportion as they do, or do not interfere with it. To this good end he must sacrifice his time, his ease, and his private advantages; and think all of them well spent, in obtaining it. Nothing certainly can better become a person, invested with a public character, than such a public spirit; nor is there any thing likely to procure him larger returns of esteem and honour. The common acknowledgments of the body will at length centre in him, who appears sincerely to aim at the common benefit. Especially if to this be added,

An impartial distribution of justice, without respect of persons, interests or opinions. When right is to be done, the good magistrate will make no distinction of small or great, friend or enemy, citizen or stranger, for the judgment is God's; and he will look upon himself as pronouncing it under his inspection, and as accountable at his bar for the equity of it. The Scripture forbids even the countenancing a poor man in his cause; which is a popular way of pervert-

perverting justice, that some men have dealt in; though without that success, which they proposed to themselves in it. But the truly upright judge will always countenance right, and discountenance wrong, whoever be the injurer, or the sufferer; and he who steers his course invariably by this rule, takes the surest, as well as the honestest way to make all men to praise him.

Courtesy and condescension is another happy quality, which never fails to make its way into the good opinion, and into the very hearts of those who are under the good magistrate's inspection: when he doth, as it were, lessen the distance which there is between him and other men, and by that means allay the envy which always attends a high station; when he is easy of access, affable, patient to hear, and "to search out the cause that he knew not"; when not only his door, but his very countenance is open to all that have any occasion to approach him.

Lastly, bounty and a generous contempt of that in which too many men place their happiness, must come in

to heighten his character. There is scarcely any quality more truly popular than this, or more suitable to the public station, in which he shines. It includes hospitality to the better sort, and charity to the poor; two virtues, that are never exercised so gracefully and well, as when they accompany each other. Hospitality sometimes degenerates into profuseness, and ends in madness and folly. When it doth so, it ill deserves the name of a virtue: even parsimony itself, which sits but ill upon persons of a public figure, is yet the more pardonable excess of the two. It is as little the sign of a wise, as of a good man, to suffer the bounds of temperance to be transgressed, in order to purchase the false, though fashionable repute of a generous entertainer. But in the offices of charity there is no danger of excess; the exercise of them is always well-pleasing to God, and honourable among men. "He hath dispersed," saith the Psalmist, "he hath given to the poor; his horn shall be exalted with honour."

He

He who thus discharges the offices of magistracy, hath a just claim to all its honours, and may truly say, "I put on
"righteousness, and it cloathed me: my
"judgment was a robe, and a diadem."

S E R M O N VIII.

ST. PAUL'S BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS
THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE;

AN ASSIZE SERMON.

ACTS XXII. 25.

*And as they bound him with thongs, Paul
said unto the centurion that stood by, Is
it lawful for you to scourge a man that
is a Roman, and uncondemned?*

IT being my design to speak something
at this time concerning the nature of
laws, and the great advantage of them
to the well-being of human society, I
H 3 think

think it not improper to found what I have to say upon the behaviour of St. Paul, as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, with respect to his civil privileges, and to his civil superiors, and judges. And I choose to do so, because this will at once give us some light into the true interpretation of the doctrine delivered by himself and others in the New Testament, concerning government; and lead us into some useful observations relating to the happiness of human society.

First; I propose to give you a brief view of the behaviour of St. Paul, as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, with respect to those civil rights, and privileges, to which the laws of the Roman, or Jewish, state entitled him; and to those civil magistrates, and judges, before whom he had occasion to appear.

In the chapter now before us, the chief captain, who appears to have acted the part of a civil magistrate, as well as of a commanding officer in Jerusalem, resolving to find out what it was that had so much incensed the whole multitude against St. Paul, commanded him

to

to be scourged, in order to his own confession of his crime. St. Paul could have borne this usage with as great Christian patience, and Roman fortitude, as any man living: and no man knew the true glory of suffering wrongfully better than he. But, instead of this, he seems to think it a much more becoming part to insist upon those civil privileges which the laws of the state entitled him to, as he was free of the city of Rome. “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” was the question which he thought fit at that time to ask. If a certain set of notions had been embraced in those days, some of his fellow-christians might perhaps have informed him, that the laws were but a dead letter; that what the executive power ordained was law, though contrary to all the laws then in force; that he who was but a subject was no proper judge of his own rights, and ought not to give so ill a precedent to other subjects, as might encourage them to dare to judge when their privileges were invaded; and much more, that he, being a Christian and an Apostle, a follower of a crucified Master, and a preach-

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er of the doctrine of the cross, ought not to shew any concern about worldly rights and privileges; but think it a glory rather to give them up to the invasion of his superiors. Thus, I say, might some Christians have taught St. Paul to have behaved himself. But he, we find, was of another opinion; and had very different sentiments concerning these matters. He thought it no argument of a Christian spirit, to suffer any thing which he could honourably avoid; and he thought it honourable to plead the privilege of a subject against the encroachments of the higher powers: and so he appeals to the laws, and claims the right of being used by the executive power, no otherwise than as they direct.

If we follow him a little farther, we shall find him, in the next chapter, brought by order of the said chief captain, before the chief priests, and councils of the Jews, to see how he could acquit himself to them. Upon his declaring his sincerity, and uprightness, the high-priest "Ananias commanded them that stood by, to smite him on the mouth." St. Paul's reply was very severe, "God shall smite thee, thou
"whited

“whited wall: for fitteſt thou there to
 “judge me after the law, and command-
 “eſt me to be ſmitten contrary to the
 “law?” And though he afterwards re-
 pent-ed of the reproachful word he gave
 the high-prieſt in his anger; yet he re-
 pent-ed not of the juſt ſenſe he had, of
 the illegal indignity offered him; or of
 his zeal againſt all ſuch magiſtrates as
 acted againſt the end of their office, and
 againſt thoſe laws by which they ought
 to be governed in the execution of it.
 Here again it is evident that this great
 Apoſtle had the ſpirit of liberty in him;
 and thought that thoſe laws which were
 made for the ſecurity and guard of it,
 were not to be diſpenſed with, at the
 pleaſure of thoſe whoſe buſineſs it was to
 execute them. Here again we find him
 pretending to know, and judge of, his
 own civil privileges; and not tamely ſub-
 mitting to the violation of them. As no
 man was more zealous for the honour
 and veneration of ſuch magiſtrates as an-
 ſwer the ends of their office, which is
 the good of human ſociety; ſo no man
 could expreſs a more hearty diſlike of
 thoſe who acted a contrary part; or a
 greater concern for the temporal good

estate of subjects, even amidst his continual labours and cares for the eternal happiness of all men. Once more,

If we look back as far as the sixteenth chapter, we shall find a yet greater proof of this. The magistrates of Philippi commanded Paul and Silas to be beaten "with many stripes, and cast into prison," but the next morning sent to the keeper of the prison to let them go. St. Paul's answer is very observable; "They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison: and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves, and fetch us out." He was just now delivered out of prison by a wonderful shock of the earth about it; and so might have escaped before this release was brought from the magistrates: but after such a good-natured message from them, one would think, he might have quietly departed. It would have been but the compliance of a subject with a lawful request of his superiors. Yet this great Apostle did not think it honourable to go away, without expressing some resentment against the invasion

invasion of the privileges of the subject, which the magistrates had been guilty of; and without pleading the cause of injured inferiors. He continues resolute till these magistrates themselves had waited upon him, and “desired him to depart out of the city.” Though a subject, and acting the part of a subject, he took upon him (by what these persons might perhaps call a stubborn behaviour) to bring the magistrates themselves to a sense of that invasion they had made upon the rights and privileges of Roman subjects; and this, though the invasion appears to have been made merely through a hasty mistake. Of so great consequence did he think it to oppose one single instance of illegal oppression!

Thus I have given you a true account of the most remarkable passages recorded concerning St. Paul’s behaviour, with respect to his civil privileges; and to those magistrates, before whom he had occasion to appear. If any one say, that all this relates only to deputed, or inferior magistrates, not to the supreme: I answer, that it cannot relate to one without relating to the other, because government cannot be managed in the

world but by deputed and inferior officers; because the christian religion (as St. Peter testifieth) commands the obedience required in it, with respect to both; because otherwise, the argument urged by some for the magistrate's uncontrollable authority, drawn from our Lord's acknowledging the power of Pilate to be from above, who was but a deputed governor, must fall to the ground; because both supreme and inferior are said, by many, to act as one authority, by the same divine commission; and so are equally borne out by it against all opposition, or at least equally elevated above all pretences of subjects to judge concerning their conduct: and because it is as impossible, according to the reasoning of some men, to oppose in any instance the lowest officer in authority, without opposing the Supreme; as it is said to be, to oppose the Supreme, without, opposing God himself, whose vicegerent he is.

I proceed, in the second place, to consider what light this account of St. Paul's behaviour will give us into the true interpretation of the doctrine delivered by himself and others, in the New Testa-

Testament, concerning government; and to enquire whether it doth not suggest some observations of importance to civil societies.

Can any one think that these passages were recorded for nothing, but to serve for an embellishment of St. Paul's story? Or can any one think, that St. Paul had a regard to his own particular worldly interest in these parts of his conduct? He, that had suffered, and knew he was to suffer, much greater hardships? He, that was ready to give up his life for the sake of Christianity, and to follow his Master through all indignities, and all persecutions, when the glory of God should call him to it? No, it was something more than his own part in this world which engaged him to shew himself after this manner; for this he could with the greatest ease have neglected. But the happiness of human society, and the good estate of the inferior part of mankind, moved his soul to a generous indignation against every thing in government which favoured of tyranny; and kindled in his breast a zeal for every thing which it was fit for subjects to enjoy. Let us therefore see, if his behaviour

haviour will not ^Alead us to some useful and important thoughts, relating to Christians incorporated in civil societies.

I need not take particular notice that St. Paul thought it not beneath a christian, and an Apostle, to concern himself with his rights and privileges, as he was a subject of the Roman state. He knew as well as any since his time, that he belonged to a city above, whose builder is God; he knew that his chief concern was eternity and heaven; he knew that no tyrannical magistrate could rob him of his innocence, or of his salvation: and ye he considered himself likewise as a member of human society, and acted the part of one who had a just sense of the privileges of his citizenship here on earth, as well as of that citizenship in heaven, which he speaks of to the Philippians, and Ephesians. And why should it be thought unworthy of any other preachers of the Gospel, to imitate so great an example, in the same great concern for the Good of human society? To proceed,

Let St. Paul himself answer all those who have on his authority pretended to exalt the executive power above all laws;
and

and above the very ends of that office for which they were instituted. He, it is plain, knew nothing of this: nor did he carry the obligation of a quiet submission to any such instances as were contrary to the design of that office. Let them learn from himself, that, when he speaks highly of magistrates, it is of such as are gods indeed in human society; such as maintain the character and dignity of their station, by answering the ends of it; and that when they descend to invade the privileges they were ordained to guard, he knew no such profound respect to be due to them. Let them learn from him, that the laws of the Roman state were above the executive power; and that the mere authority of the magistrate could not make that to be law, which was against the written laws; or oblige him to comply with what was injurious to his civil privileges; and consequently, that he understood not his Master's doctrine concerning the governors of this world, to be destructive of the privileges and happiness of the governed society; and that he himself, in his own doctrine, delivered in other places, meant nothing contrary to these.

Let

Let them learn from his practice, which is certainly the best interpreter of his own doctrine, and that of his Master and fellow-apostles, that when he saith, "there is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God"; and that when his great Master acknowledges the power of Pilate to be from above, no more could be meant, than that it was agreeable to God's will that some persons should be invested with power for the good of human society; but not that God had made them uncontrollable in acting against his commission, and to the ruin of their fellow-creatures. And let them remember, that when St. Paul commanded respect, and forbade opposition to the higher powers; and that when St. Peter commanded the same subjection both to the supreme and deputed magistrates; they did not intend by this to oblige subjects to a quiet submission to such illegal and unjust conduct, as affects and shakes the universal happiness. And,

If they still repeat the old question, Who shall judge of the invasion of privileges? let the same St. Paul answer them, who,

who, in the capacity of a subject, more than once is recorded (in the short history we have of his actions) to have presumed to judge concerning his own privileges, against the invasion of the magistrate; and to have done this, as by a right belonging to every member of the same society. His christianity did not make him forget that he was a Roman; and as a Roman, he judged that he had the privileges of a Roman: and that his christianity did not oblige him to give up these to any mortal, as long as he could with honour keep them. The possibility of his mistaking in this, in which he acted not as an Apostle was no argument to him against this right: nor did the weakness of other men's judgments prevail with him not to set them an example of judging in the like circumstances. What confusion, what disorder, say some, must ensue, if subjects be allowed to judge concerning the invasion of their own rights and privileges? But let them believe St. Paul for once, that much more misery must ensue upon human society, if it be a settled point that the executive powers may absolutely, and without controul, determine what they please concerning

cerning the inferior part of the world. If any one ask where he saith this, I answer, his behaviour speaks it aloud: for he never would have acted the part which he did, could he have thought it more for public good, that subjects should give up all their judgments to the determination of their magistrates, than that they should judge concerning the violation of their common rights after the best manner they could. Let not men therefore forget modesty so much as to laugh out of countenance this right of judging in subjects, which St. Paul himself claimed merely as he was a subject.

Let those learn it from St. Paul, who will not bear it from others, that rights and privileges, liberty and property, and the like, are not words fitted only to raise the spirits of the people, and to foment disturbances in society; but that they are things worth contending for. Some may think (unless respect to an Apostle a little divert them from it) what great matter if St. Paul had borne a little scourging? Or why could not he pass over the injuries offered him by his governors? To which I know no better answer than this, that his behaviour was
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what it was, merely because they were magistrates; because it was a case not of concern to himself only, but to human society. For he could bear, and pass by injuries as well as any man: and had they been private persons who had offered him any as great indignities, I doubt not, he would have borne them without any return but that of forgiveness. But when the civil privileges of that society to which he belonged, were invaded by those whose duty and profession it was to maintain them, he thought it a just occasion to shew his sense of so great an evil; though it immediately touched only himself. The consideration of the character and office of those who offered the injuries, was so far from determining him to pass them over with silence; (according to some men's way of arguing) that it was the very thing that made him look upon them not as private injuries; but with a resentment due to injuries of a public and universal concern. And however some may ridicule the liberties of subjects; St. Paul, it is plain, was for standing fast, not only "in the liberty" "with which Christ had made him free" from the Jewish law of ceremonies; but
also

also in that liberty with which the laws of nature, and of the Roman state, had made him free from oppression and tyranny. For,

It is another observation which we may make from his example, that he thought the end of written laws to be the security of the subject against any arbitrary proceedings of the executive power; and that this could not be, unless the executive power were governed by these laws, as well as the subject. If this had not been his opinion; it had been frivolous for him to have urged his privileges founded upon the laws: by urging of which he plainly implies, that they were the measure of the magistrate's behaviour towards the subject. And I hope, it is the same in all the like establishments. But how contrary is this to the maxims of some, who make the laws insignificant trifles; and place the will of the executive power above them, declaring that otherwise there can be no such thing as government? If these notions be embraced, what must be thought of St. Paul under the Roman state, who thought it his happiness to have rights and privileges settled by written laws? What must

must we think of the wisest nations in former times, who could devise no greater security, against oppression and unhappiness in societies, than laws? And if we come home to ourselves, what must we think of the envied constitution under which we live, and, by the virtue and power of laws, enjoy the chief happiness that can be wished for in social life?

A lasting liberty is founded upon laws; and is the result of a good constitution of government, as health is of a right constitution of body. In this also like health; that it is valued most by those who have known the taste of it, under the first apprehension, or sense, of the want of it; but little prized by thoughtless men, under a secure and unshaken enjoyment: while slavery, like sickness, to those who never tasted it, seems nothing; and to those who have been oppressed long enough to forget what liberty is, becomes the more tolerable, as a bodily indisposition doth to such as know not, or despair of, a better state.

Thus I have laid before you a true account of the behaviour and notions of that Apostle, in favour of the rights of subjects

subjects, who hath been long, and often represented by many, as the greatest asserter of an unlimited authority in the executive power. And though I have been treating of civil and secular concerns, yet, I hope, I may be safe under the patronage of St. Paul's example, and of those Scriptures which give us this account of his conduct and behaviour, as of something not unuseful to men and christians.

And now, if St. Paul shewed so great a respect to the written laws of that state under which he lived; if he thought it worth his while (whose grand affair was to propagate a new religion, and the belief of a future state) to concern himself so much with this world, as to insist upon his rights and privileges, as he was a subject, and to shew no ordinary regard to them; if he thought it the happiness of a kingdom to have such privileges as are fit for subjects settled by law, and an happiness not to be shaken at the will of the executive power; if he thought that subjects might judge concerning the invasion of their privileges, and were not brought into being to submit to every thing imposed upon them: let us learn from

from so great an example, to value our own happiness in that legal establishment under which we live.

As laws have turned the desert of this world into a paradise, and the wildness of mankind into human society; let us of this kingdom acknowledge our part in this happiness to be much above that of others; and let our zeal for it rise in proportion to the value of the thing itself. Let our government by laws be the chief object of our public concern; and as we value that, let our value and estimation rise for the supreme head, and every branch of the executive power, under which we live so happy and easy at home, whilst they all join in making the laws the measure of their whole administration: and let us, as becomes loyal subjects and good christians, obey the precept of the Apostle Paul: "I exhort, " that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for " all men: for kings, and for all that " are in authority; that we may lead a " quiet and peaceable life in all godliness " and honesty."

SER-

S E R M O N IX.

THE MOTIVES TO LIBERALITY CONSIDERED;

AN INFIRMARY SERMON.

DEUTERONOMY XV. II.

*The poor shall never cease out of the land,
therefore I command thee, saying, Thou
shalt open thy hand wide unto thy bro-
ther, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the
land.*

THESE words, as addressed to the
people of Israel by Moses, their
great lawgiver, furnish us with a con-
vincing instance of the care taken in the
Vol. IX. I Jewish

Jewish law to inculcate the duties of humanity and compassion to the poor. The reason or motive, upon which they are enforced, is not indeed peculiar to that people; it takes a wider compass, and reaches to every age or nation under heaven: wherever our inquiry is directed, the same truth offers itself to our reflections, that "the poor have never yet ceased out of the land": the history of those, who have gone before us, exhibits the same variety of misery, to which human nature in this state of weakness and imperfection has been ever exposed; if particular persons have no reason to lament their own state and condition, still they cannot help seeing and sharing in the sorrows of others; and we shall all be greatly disappointed, if we hope to live in a world, where there is no poverty or distress, where there is no sorrow, and where the voice of complaint is not heard.

The gloomy and the splenetic, from this view of the world, have been sometimes tempted to question the wisdom and goodness of Providence, and to ask in the language of impatience, are not all the children of the same God? Why then is one vessel made to honour, and an-

another to dishonour? Why are the blessings of life dealt out with such a partial hand, and whilst one man is rioting in the various bounties of the creation, and enjoying every comfort that can smoothe his passage through life, why is another doomed to labour and sorrow, and to linger out a miserable being in pain and poverty?

To this objection we have a ready answer, which admits of no reply: It hath pleased the great Disposer of all things to ordain this variety in the dispensations of his providence: and may not he, from whom cometh every gift and blessing, do what he will with his own? But there is no occasion to seek for an answer in the absolute power and dominion of God. There is a wisdom to be traced in those dispensations, which, perhaps, to the eye of human reason may at first view seem strange and unaccountable; there is a goodness, that shines forth even in the gloomy scenes of Providence, abundantly sufficient to justify those ways of God, which carry with them the appearance of harshness and partiality.

The occasion of our assembling this day, cannot but remind us, that this in-

equality in the lot and condition of men, still makes a part in the system of the world: but we come not here to arraign and censure it: that spirit of love and affection, with which we are disposed to attend to the distresses of mankind, directs us to a more pleasing employment of our present thoughts; it prompts us to consider what wise ends this variety in the constitution of the world was designed to answer by that God, who ordained it; what care at the same time has been taken by the kind Author of our nature to lessen the painful sense of this inequality, and to shew in the application of the whole, how well adapted in every view these institutions are to carry on the same wise and benevolent intentions of Providence.

It is a reflection immediately arising from the nature of man, and the constitution of the things around him, that he was intended for society by the God who made him. Unable of himself to acquire the necessary accommodations and comforts of life, much less to secure himself in the enjoyment of them, he was led by a sense of his own natural weakness to seek that support in the social life, which,
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in his single independent state, his own experience taught him was not within the reach of all his powers and abilities. Society in this view directly resulting from that imperfection (if I may so speak) with which man came forth from the hand of his Maker, was plainly the ordinance and appointment of God, who, at the same time that he laid the foundation of it in the constitution of man, must be supposed to have ordained every thing essential to the support of it.

Look then into the world, and see how the case stands; you will observe, that the same God, who designed man for society, hath made that disposition of his favours and blessings, which seems best calculated to give it strength and security. Hence it is, that "the rich and the poor meet together," each of them filling up their respective stations, each of them discharging those offices and duties, which are necessary to the support of the whole community: hence may we trace that variety in the tempers, the capacities and inclinations of men, which lead them to different employments, and fit them for different scenes of life and action: hence again it is, that whilst the

learned and contemplative are employed in searches after knowledge, those of a lower class and of inferior abilities are exercised in the more laborious offices of life, submitting to vexations and toils, that others may enjoy with more safety, ease, and pleasure, a larger share of blessings and comforts.

In this view we cannot but admire that close connection, that firm bond of union, which directly results from this wise, this gracious constitution of things: we, in truth, feel that dependance, which links together every state and condition of life: we see the various ranks and orders of men mutually engaged in promoting that harmony and correspondence, which introduces and preserves every social blessing: the poor on the one hand, feeling themselves indebted to the higher ranks of life for protection, support and encouragement, whilst on the other, they, whose lot has called them to more plentiful circumstances, or a more exalted situation, are forced to acknowledge, that, in many instances, they could neither have, nor enjoy their own peculiar distinctions of rank and fortune, did not want and a sense of that want whet the industry

industry of the poor mechanic, call forth all his strength and ingenuity, and oblige him to wear out his powers and faculties in collecting and preparing those various materials, without which the fashionable elegance and vanity of higher life could not be supported.

Nor does this divine appointment appear less suitable to the wisdom and goodness of its author, or less worthy of our admiration, when we consider, that this calls forth the virtues, which are proper to a state of discipline, the poor man's patience and resignation, his contentment and reliance on the will of Heaven; that it opens to the generous and enlarged heart a scene for the display of that generosity, which is the most pleasing exercise of the soul, by giving occasion to exert that humanity and compassion, which constitutes the happiness of the great and the wealthy, and is indeed the only distinction, for which a wise and a good man would envy them; that to this we owe the most shining characters, the most exalted examples of every useful and amiable virtue; and that in consequence of this divine appointment we see and experience that mutual exchange

of good offices, which relieve or remove the sorrows, and more effectually extend the joys and happiness of life.

So graciously has the disposer of all things consulted the general good of his creatures by this unequal distribution of his blessings, thereby ordaining "the abundance of some for a supply of the wants of others," and uniting all by that common relation, in which the rich and the poor stand to the same Father, to that God, who is the Maker of them all.

Hard indeed may seem the lot of those, to whom Providence has assigned the painful task of constant labour; who toil for their daily bread, that they may at last eat it in the sweat of their brows: harder still, when, in the course of a laborious life, any evil overtakes them, which by destroying the health and vigour of the constitution, deprives them of the means of supporting themselves and their families, and leaves them to drag out the remains of a wretched being in sickness and pain, sharpened by distress and poverty. What a scene of misery does this open to our view? And can this, it may be said, be the appointment of
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of God? Is there no provision made by the common Father of all to lessen the sense of these evils, to alleviate the pain, to administer comfort to the wretched in the day of their affliction? There is such a provision: Look into the heart of man, attend to the voice of nature and of reason, or to the express authority of God, and you will find them all breathing the same sentiments of humanity and compassion, and enforcing them in the language of the text, "Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land."

There are affections of tenderness and humanity, which were born with us, wrought into our frame and constitution. The human heart is formed to melt at human misfortunes; and hence the sight of any object in distress immediately affects the tender passions; we feel the sorrows of the wretched, and even without waiting the slower admonitions of reason we fly to relieve them: nor is this the effect of discipline, or the prejudice of education, it is the constitution of man, it is the sympathy of nature.

Should the heart be hardened against those natural feelings, which in most cases plead the cause of the poor and distressed with an irresistible eloquence, those reflections, which reason calls in to their aid, enforce the same duties of humanity and compassion. For reason directs us to consider that general relation, which we all bear to each other, as children of the same God, liable to the same infirmities, subject to that variety of distress and misery, which we see, and therefore ought to pity in others, as the misery of our common nature: it reminds us, that no state of life is out of the reach of pain and sorrow; that neither wealth nor dignity can give us an exemption from the general lot, or secure us from taking our share of that weakness, which belongs to us as men; that there is no disorder either of body or mind, no want or infirmity, no calamity or distress, which may not sooner or later be our own portion, and therefore demands from us that compassion, which, in a change of circumstances, whether owing to our own folly, or the common unavoidable accidents of human life, we in our turn may with all
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the agony of sorrow implore for ourselves.

Nor does the voice of reason less demand our attention, when it admonishes us to consider, what favour and esteem in the eyes of the world, what dignity of character it gives, to be employed, as the instruments of Providence in being, as it were "fathers to the poor, in giving eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame," in restoring them to health and joy, or administering to them that comfort on the bed of sickness, which may support them under all their sorrows. It must be a reflection, to which a mind conscious of true honour can never be indifferent, that there is no character, which so effectually commands the admiration, the reverence, the affections of mankind, as that of the patron of the distressed, the compassionate friend, the generous benefactor, whose heart is enlarged beyond himself, and delights in making all around him happy. Is not this character, the best formed to win the heart? Is not this, that true greatness of mind, which makes us the ornament, the blessing of the times in which

we live, which transmits our names with honour to posterity?

Nor is this all, disposed as we are by nature, and instructed by reason, to open our hands and our hearts to the relief of the poor and wretched, we are carried forward with alacrity to this labour of love, by that self-enjoyment, which ever attends and rewards the exercise of humanity and compassion.

For what indeed can be a more delightful enjoyment to the heart of man, what more exquisite pleasure on this side heaven, than to see ourselves surrounded with the blessed effects of our benevolence; to see the poor and the miserable clothed and fed by our bounty; to see the streams of our love and affection flow with an uninterrupted course to the various objects of distress and misery; to see the wants, the diseases, the infirmities of mankind removed or alleviated, and a scene of cheerfulness and gratitude on every side expand and diffuse itself! Let me appeal to you, the true friends and lovers of mankind: has not the happiness, which by acts of kindness and generosity you communicated to others, immediately become your own? Have you

you not been sensible of a secret joy springing up in your own breasts, whilst you have been relieving the voice of distress, and making the afflicted heart to sing for joy? And has not the reflection afterwards given you true peace and composure of mind, that feast of conscience, which is the most welcome consolation, when every other comfort fails? In this, I am sure, I speak the sentiments of every man, who knows what it is to satisfy the hungry soul with bread, and cover the naked with a garment; who knows what it is, to open his heart to the tender pleadings of compassion, to give comfort to him, who lieth sick upon his bed, to pour oil into his wounds, and by a friendly hand to restore him to health and happiness. Words are wanting to describe the blessed state of a mind, conscious of having made it the great aim and pleasure of life to render others happy: you, my brethren, feel it this day; enjoy it; it is the present reward of your labours; cherish it; it is the assurance of your Maker's favour, it is the earnest of your future joy.

To these motives, by which nature and reason call us to the exercise of humanity

manity and compassion, religion has added a more awful enforcement, the express command and authority of God.

In this view, consider with what a spirit of tenderness the Jewish lawgiver extends his regard to every instance of poverty and distress: the stranger, the fatherless and the widow have a distinguished place amongst those, whose circumstances, with a more peculiar force, solicit the compassion of their brethren: "They were to eat and be filled, and to rejoice before the Lord." The annual gleanings of the fields, the whole produce of the seventh year were appropriated to the poor, and in order to secure to them that kind provision, which was necessary for their support and refreshment, the law, with that humanity, which is one proof of its origin from the fountain of love, has declared, that he has a claim to the blessing of Providence, "whose heart is not hardened, nor his hand shut from his poor brother. If there be among you a poor man within any of thy gates in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt open thy hand wide unto him, thou shalt

“ shalt surely give him, because that for
“ this thing the Lord thy God shall bless
“ thee in all thy works, and in all that
“ thou puttest thine hand unto.”

Look to the Gospel, and the whole strain of it is love, mercy and compassion; it was the character of the blessed Jesus, the employment and pleasure of his whole life to be doing good: his miracles, indeed, as instances of his boundless power strike us with awe and astonishment, but how do they affect us, when we consider them as the tenderest expressions of his love and beneficence to men! To supply their wants, to cure their diseases, to relieve their miseries, were the proofs he gave, that he came down from the Father of mercies, and was designed by his example to diffuse amongst his followers the warmest sentiments of love and affection to each other. Agreeably to which it may be observed, that there is no argument, no consideration, capable of affecting the human heart, which he has not employed in his religion to enforce the same spirit of tenderness and compassion. We are entreated, we are exhorted, we are commanded “ to love as brethren, to remember
“ them

“them which suffer adversity, to put on
 “bowels of mercy, to be pitiful and
 “tender-hearted:” and we are assured
 for our encouragement, that “God will
 “not forget our work and labour of
 “love,” but so proportion our reward,
 as we have discharged it like men, and
 like christians.

It is no less to the honour of our country than of our religion, that we can appeal to the many excellent institutions of charity in this kingdom, which have sprung from the influence of these motives, for there is scarce any infirmity or disorder, any accident or distemper incident to the human frame, to which the spirit of humanity has not in some degree applied a remedy or a relief.

It is this spirit which takes under its care the helpless and forlorn infant; and supplies, as far as it can, the tenderness of the parent.

It is this, which endeavours to fortify the young and unexperienced, when they enter into life, with the best principles for their future conduct, guards their innocence, and trains them up to be diligent, industrious, and useful to society, the
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ornament and defence of their country.

It is this spirit of humanity, which extends itself to every scene of danger and distress, aiding and softening the pangs and sorrows of nature, restoring to the disordered mind its native strength and soundness, with its discipline correcting the idle and the dissolute, and at the same time with that charity, which hopeth all things, and wishes to prevent the wretchedness of despair, opening a welcome retreat, a house of refuge to the returning sinner.

With this indulgent care has the benevolent spirit of the present age exerted its influence to prevent, or at least to mitigate the sorrows of the afflicted. And let it be some comfort to us to reflect, that however we may have reason to lament the decay of many other virtues, that of mercy and compassion still continues to form and adorn our national character.

The works of mercy are indeed as various, as the wants and infirmities of mankind; and no good Christian, however he may object to any particular scheme of charity, can possibly in this
age

age want an opportunity of indulging his own natural temper and inclination in the exercise of this virtue: but allow me on this occasion, without detracting from the merit of other excellent designs, to express my own partiality to those institutions, which provide places of reception and comfort to such objects, as poverty and sickness, the two greatest natural evils of life, recommend to our compassion.

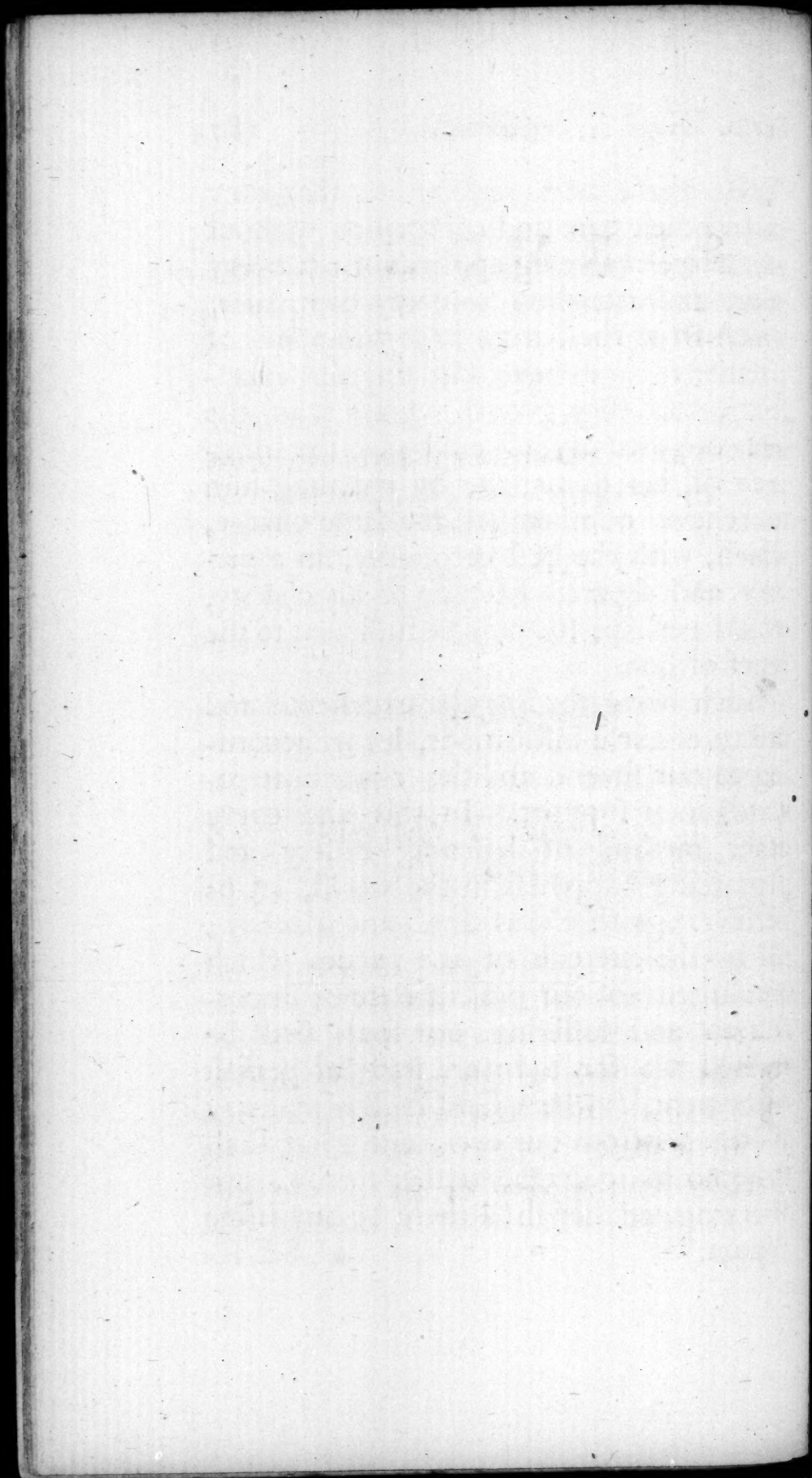
I need not now enlarge upon the general utility of Public Infirmaries. It is with pleasure we can now appeal to experience, which has abundantly confirmed, what the wishes of the warmest hearts could only promise at the first institution of them in this kingdom.

Only give me leave to observe, that they are formed upon principles best calculated for the encouragement of the industrious poor, excluding by their rules and discipline the lazy, or such as under the false appearance of distress might intercept that charity, which you design only for real objects of misery; that they provide for every circumstance, which may in the most perfect and speedy manner administer relief and comfort to those,

those, whose cases require it; that they extend their care and compassion without partiality, receiving applications at every hour, and attending to every complaint, which from the nature of it will admit of a remedy; and have this singular excellency, that they give to a good man the best opportunity of enlarging the influence of his humanity, by enabling him to relieve numbers at the same charge, which, with the best œconomy, in a private and separate exercise of his charity, would perhaps scarcely be sufficient to the relief of one.

Such being the singular excellence and utility of these institutions, let us according to our several abilities contribute towards their support. In this and every other method of lessening misery and promoting happiness in the world, let us persevere with chearfulness and alacrity; till by the exercise of the virtues which are suited to our present state of imperfection and suffering, our souls shall be trained up for a future state of perfect enjoyment, "where God shall wipe away
"all tears from our eyes, and there shall
"be no more death, neither sorrow, nor
"crying, neither shall there be any more
"pain."

S E R-



S E R M O N X.

MERCENARY PRINCIPLES DESTRUCTIVE
OF NATIONAL SECURITY ;

A FAST SERMON.

JOSHUA VII. 8.

*O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel
turneth their backs before their ene-
mies ?*

THE event which gave rise to this
exclamation was a sudden stroke
of ill success, which came upon the
Israelites in the very career of victory.
An

An advanced party were smitten by the men of Ai, who chased them from before the gate, even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down. The consequence of which repulse was this, that the hearts of the people melted, and became as water.

But, without doubt, what these lost in spirits, their enemies gained: while the one side was terrified and dismayed, the other assumed fresh confidence, and grew insolent in victory; for, perhaps, this people, in spite of all their boasted privileges, were not invincible; and who knew but the gods of the nations might prove at last too hard for the God of Israel?

How then could their leader maintain his credit, and support his authority among them, since this unfavourable event seemed to reproach his own veracity, and the veracity of God? And how could he rally such a broken-hearted and dispirited people, who had always a jealous eye upon the contending powers, and at every cross accident distrusted their final security? He doubtless must be in some confusion as well as they; would find it hard to vindicate his own honour, and
support

support their farther dependence upon the God of Israel; and therefore, like a person on the brink of distraction and despair, he rent his cloaths, and fell prostrate upon the ground, he and all the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads; like poor afflicted supplicants pleading for mercy, and begging to know the cause of their sufferings.

Joshua in particular thus expostulates with God; "O Lord God, wherefore
"hast thou brought all this people over
"Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of
"the Amorites to destroy us? Would to
"God we had been content, and dwelt
"on the other side Jordan!"

This appears to be the language of great dissatisfaction and despair; by no means consistent with that extraordinary measure of wisdom and piety, which are allowed to be essential in his character. He seems to insinuate, as if God had only freed them from one snare to draw them into a greater; had delivered them from one scene of calamities, only to make their ruin more wretched, by making it more conspicuous, and had swelled their hopes merely to increase their disappointments.

Such

Such impious jealousies as these had been common amongst the people; but one would hardly expect to find them in the breast of so wise and steady a commander. The truth was, he did not know what to say: his reason was so disordered and perplexed at this unhappy change of circumstances, that he could not reflect with patience upon the causes which might probably produce it. This appears from the words before us; “O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?”

Had he considered this affair with that caution and deliberation which its importance necessarily required, he would not have suspected a breach of covenant on the side of God, but on the people; for the obligations were mutual, and God had no longer engaged to protect them from violence and destruction, than they walked in his laws, and obeyed his commandments.

But as soon as the cause of this unhappy miscarriage came to be more particularly inquired into, the justice of God then appeared very manifest: it was not he had failed in his promises, but Israel
had

had sinned; for God had charged them not to meddle with the plunder of Jericho, since it was a cursed thing; if they did, they would pollute themselves, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and bring trouble and vexation upon it. All was to be destroyed, except the vessels of gold and silver, of brass and iron, which were to be consecrated to divine uses, and put into God's treasury: yet in spite of this strict command, upon the observation of which no less than the welfare of all Israel depended, some had been such vile mercenary wretches as to sacrifice the public good to private gain; had taken some of the richest of the spoils, and in a secret clandestine manner converted them to their own advantage: "They have taken," says God, "of the accursed thing, "and have stolen, and dissembled also, "and they have put it even amongst "their own stuff." And is not this a shameful breach of covenant? Is it any wonder that the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs upon them? The reason is plain; because they were accursed: "Neither will I be with you any more,

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“except you destroy the accursed from
“amongst you.”

Here then was an exprefs declaration that God would never prosper the arms of the Israelites, nor give them any advantages over their enemies, whilst they acted upon any selfish or private views; for though it was his design to secure the peace and happiness of this people, yet he had made no absolute unconditional covenant with them: all the prosperity he had promised them was plainly relative to their manners and good behaviour; therefore every member of this society was equally concerned to set a guard upon his own conduct, as well as others; because the compact was general, excepting no particular persons; nor had any particular persons an interest separate from the public: therefore, to be intent upon accumulating wealth, heaping up riches, and aggrandising themselves under such circumstances, and in such perilous times as those, when the welfare of the whole community required a contempt of poverty and danger, and a ready sacrifice of private interests and enjoyments, was in fact to ruin the common cause, to transgress the laws
of

of their sovereign, and in the end to destroy themselves.

A very few such corrupt members as these would overturn the state; for, respecting only natural cases, they would soon spread their malignant humours over the whole political body, and poison its constitution: therefore they must be lopt off to preserve the soundness and vigour of the whole. A strict inquiry must be made to find out such grievances; and, when found, the authors of them should be punished in some open and notorious manner, both for the benefit of public example, and because it is better for one man to die, and that a whole nation perish not.

This sound principle of political security Divine Providence has sufficiently authorised by this instance before us. Joshua was a perfect stranger to the author of his people's sufferings: he was conscious of having done no wrong himself, and, amidst such a numerous host of people, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for him to find out who had. But God was pleased to assist him in the discovery: he commands him to sanctify the people, to bring every tribe

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before

before him, and he himself would point out the tribe where the transgression was concealed: from tribes he should proceed in like manner to families, from families to households, from households to single men: and, says God, "whosoever shall
" be taken with the accursed thing, shall
" be burnt with fire, he and all that he
" hath. "

By this means the greedy selfish wretch was soon detected; was confronted with the villainy, and forced to own it: and the sentence of death was speedily executed upon him, as God commanded; for all Israel stoned him with stones, and then burned him with all his ill-gotten treasure. The consequence of which public example of justice was this, that the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger, and Israel prospered in the destruction of their enemies.

This single instance might, perhaps, be sufficient to justify the following inference, namely, that God abhors a narrow selfish spirit, which regards only private advantages, though at the expence of public good: and the punishment here inflicted might serve as a warning to every member of society not to run the
hazard

hazard of exposing both himself and his fellow-citizens to the divine displeasure by a conduct so sinful and provoking. But since too much cannot be done to open the eyes of an unthinking people, who are sleeping at ease in the midst of danger, and who will not be at the pains to examine into their own hearts, and make those discoveries which are essential to their welfare; we will therefore pursue this argument a little farther, by considering the bad effects of mercenary principles upon the national prosperity, after the children of Israel were firmly established in their promised land.

When Samuel was too old to manage the reins of power, and to support all that weight of business, which so large a community must necessarily lay upon him, he thought it prudent to commit the management of all public affairs to the care of his two sons; who, from so shining an example of strict honour and integrity, and the national prosperity attending it, one would have thought had been less liable to fall into a snare, which must inevitably prove their ruin: but no sooner were they invested with the trust, than they began to abuse it;

they only considered government as a better opportunity for becoming rich; therefore they turned aside from their father's honest upright ways to follow filthy lucre; and their rapaciousness became so intolerably offensive as to provoke the injured to meditate a remedy and to strive to redress themselves: the consequences whereof were civil broils and popular tumults; and, at last, an intire subversion of that form of government, which, on the best foundations, had been established by God himself.

In the prophet Isaiah's time this vice became more universal; it then descended from the rulers, and infected the whole body of the people: it was then a general complaint commanded to be made against them, and likewise visited with a general judgment; for God declares by him, that he was wroth at their covetousness, and therefore had smitten them.

But the prophet Jeremiah makes more grievous and bitter complaints against them still: he declares that God had sent a multitude of enemies to destroy them; because from the least of them to the greatest of them, every one was given
to

to “ covetousness; from the prophet
“ even unto the priest every one dealeth
“ falsely; therefore, says God, I will
“ give their wives unto others, and their
“ fields to them that shall inherit
“ them.”

This was one of the prevailing vices of those times, which made them ripe for destruction; which helped forward their wretchedness, and proved the sad occasion of a long and grievous captivity: and, what deserves our particular remark in this place, is, that the very same branch of iniquity, which was productive of such bitter fruits to them, was no less fruitful afterwards in poisoning their enemies; for the prophet, commissioned to denounce their overthrow, prophesies their end was come, because they had filled up the measure of their covetousness: and whether from the great terror of God’s judgments, or from the natural timidity of this vice, which disposes men to be cowards, it followed, that they turned their backs upon their enemies, they forbore to fight, they skulked into dark secret holds, and became as women.

From the Jewish we may next proceed to the Roman people, and see how the

case stood with that community, which was once the nurse of heroes, the queen of nations, the glory of empires, and the truest pattern of liberty and virtue. In the times of the Jugurthine war, they were fallen from every thing great and praise-worthy into the deepest gulphs of avarice and corruption. That generous and noble spirit, which once animated all their actions, and made them the terror as well as envy of the world, was now degenerated into such mercenary selfish principles as made them ripe for destruction. Their enemies had now discovered a much nearer way to conquest than through fields of blood: they had learned a secret how to subdue those, whom arms had made invincible; for they were ready to deliver up themselves and their liberties, to any that would bid highest, and give most money for them. Their leaders made war to enrich themselves with the spoils of others, more than to acquire glory, and redress the injured; and often plundered those very provinces which they ought in duty to have protected.

The darling passion of their souls was an insatiable thirst after wealth; which
they

they were resolved to gratify at the expence of justice and every other social virtue: the means employed to secure it, whether right or wrong, made no part of their consideration; and when obtained, it was as scandalously used as acquired: it served only to administer fuel to the fire of licentiousness, and to make them more splendidly wicked. But their luxury and debauchery soon unstrung the sinews of their bodies, and enfeebled their minds: it made the greatest heroes of the world shrink into a race of cowards; and, at last, become slaves to some of the most barbarous and contemptible of mankind.

And thus fell the greatest and noblest state that ever arose upon the stage of the world: it was sacrificed to the greedy avaricious spirit of base and unworthy men. And wherever such seeds of corruption are nursed and cherished, they will always produce such rank pernicious weeds, as will intercept the bright beams of virtue, and smother the seeds of public happiness.

It has been very justly observed, that there are always, in every state, some natural and moral causes tending to sink and destroy, as well as to raise and sup-

port it. That the observation will hold good in the present instance is very manifest: for in the earliest state of this vice, even in its infancy, when it has no other object of pleasure, but the greatness of its acquisitions, though it may make a people industrious, it can never make them brave; because it is such a narrow, mean, and spiritless principle, as must necessarily chill the generous warmth of all public and social undertakings. Why else does it prevail mostly in the cold, barren, and inactive stage of life, when the sun is almost setting, and the powers of nature too far spent to ripen any fruits to perfection?

Should then the exigencies of state require vigorous efforts, or the bold enterprising attempts of personal courage and manly activity, where are the persons proper to engage in them? Will not this unanimating principle transform youth into age, destroy ability, and make men drowsy, slow, and impotent? Will not its cold ungenial breath blast the laurels of martial fame, freeze men into cowards, and make them skulk from danger? Will it not strip them of every noble

noble and generous sentiment, and sink them into diffidence and despair?

When men are once placed in affluent and splendid circumstances, it is seldom in their power to escape those evils which are known to be their frequent attendants. Riches are the natural incentives to luxury; luxury is the parent of indolence: and when intemperance and idleness are become ruling vices, both the love of business and the love of liberty must be soon extinguished. They will then find themselves fast bound in the chains of a shameful and inglorious captivity; will be forced to submit to the worst drudgery, and will have no courage to look up and demand their deliverance. How poor then must be the services of such abject slaves to save a sinking state, should there be no other to defend it?

If ever they are spurred to action, it must not be by the desire of applause, nor the dread of shame; since they know no good but self-enjoyment, and dread no evil but necessity or want: if ever they are induced to contend with difficulties respecting the public, it must be only in such circumstances where the spoil is

great; or the bait very tempting: in all others, where that phantom honour is to be the sole reward of victory, they will despise the shadowy nothing, and disdain the struggle.

The vices of the mind, like the distempers of the body, are very infectious: no rank or condition of people can be exempted from the danger of their contagion: therefore, in what part soever of the flock they break forth, the whole will perish under the poisonous influence of the same disease. In superior stations, indeed they will appear the more glaring and conspicuous, because of the eminency of place: and their effects are more to be dreaded in proportion to men's larger sphere of activity: but one talent may be abused as well as ten; and there may, nay, experience teaches there often is the same corrupt heart, the same vicious desire, and in all respects the same propensity to evil, in the breast of the lowest mechanic, as of those who possess the highest degrees of power: the only difference is this; the one does wrong because he can do it, and the other would if he could.

But

But when God is pleased to meditate the destruction of a kingdom or people, he is not provoked to this strange work so frequently by the wickedness of a few, as of a multitude. The sum total of a national iniquity is made up of the additional vices of all its particular members; and he who can see the hearts of all men knows how much each individual contributes to the common stock: and generally speaking, his mercy and forbearance is so great that he suffers the account to swell till it can rise no higher. Had there been ten righteous men found in Sodom, it might have remained unto this day; and the house of Judah would never have seen so many bitter calamities fallen upon her children, but because from "the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there was no soundness in them."

Whenever therefore we find the rod of vengeance hanging over our heads, it will be of more use to divert the blow, that we consider the state of our own actions, than that we censure the conduct of others; for, at the most, this is only comparing one wicked character with another; and the discovery of our neighbour's

bour's guilt is no proof of our innocence.

If we would act like men truly concerned for our own and the public welfare, we should use our utmost endeavours to remove the causes of our public misfortunes; and, since a general reformation must begin with particulars, so every man should be sure to reform one: without this, that external shew of religion, which is only put on for the solemnity of this day, is but a further aggravation of our guilt, a daring insult upon omniscience and a mockery at heaven; and so little reason shall we have to expect that God will fight our battles and go forth with our fleets and armies, that he will certainly fight against us, defeat all our enterprises, and make us shamefully turn our backs before our enemies.

Let then the fate of other kingdoms and nations be a warning to us to avoid their vices. Let us carefully shun those dangerous rocks whereon they have split and perished; and teach posterity the wisdom and safety of turning to God by repentance and reformation. Let us banish from our hearts the accursed

fed thing that provokes God to anger ; and learn to know the things that make for peace, before they be hid from our eyes. Let us acknowledge him as the sole fountain both of private and public good, and not run after those lying vanities that can never profit nor deliver us. Let us not ask for wealth to consume it upon our lusts, nor covet ease and security to live in riot and excess. In a word, let us be temperate with respect to all the enjoyments of life; and diligent and active in our several stations and callings to promote the honour of God, and the true interest of our country ; and then we may hope to reap all the blessed fruits of peace and social harmony, be secure from the terrors of impending judgments, and march safely on to the possession of our heavenly Canaan.

The first of the two consuls, Lucius Junius Brutus, was a man of great courage and ability. He was the son of the famous Brutus who had helped to overthrow the monarchy. He was elected consul in 509 BC, and his first act was to drive the Tarquins out of Rome. He then led the Romans to victory over the Latins at the Battle of Lake Regillus. In the same year, he was elected consul again, and he continued to lead the Romans in their wars against the Latins and the Etruscans. He was a great leader and a great warrior, and he was loved by his people. He died in 493 BC, and he was buried in the city of Rome.

S E R M O N XI.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY;

A FAST SERMON.

PSALM CXXII. 6, 7.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

THESE words are an affectionate exhortation of king David to his subjects and countrymen to shew their zeal for their mother city, Jerusalem, by offering

offering up their prayers to God for her welfare and prosperity. In the performance of this duty he not only leads them by his example, but hath in the words of the text put a song of blessing and prayer in their mouths; and expresses his own good wishes to his country in a strain of so much life and beauty, as must almost naturally raise the like public concern and affection in others.

I cannot therefore tell where better to direct your thoughts upon this occasion, than to the words of the text; from whence I shall endeavour, first, to recommend to you that public affection or love to our country, which is so agreeably expressed in them; and secondly, to shew particularly what are the present duties, to which this love of our country calls us, and which the piety and wisdom of our governors have appointed this solemnity to remind us of.

The love of our country is a principle, which hath been more celebrated in all ages, hath been the subject of more praise, and panegyric, than any other affection in the whole train of virtue. It hath been the constant theme of poets, orators and historians. Statues and coins have

have been erected and struck, and all the treasures of art and wit perpetually exhausted, in doing honour to those, who have excelled in this character. And indeed the name of patriot implies in its true sense every thing, that is most great and godlike among men: it carries in it the idea of a public blessing; it implies a power of doing good, exerted and extended to whole communities; and resembles within its sphere, that universal Providence, which protects and supports the world. But if we inquire more closely into the actions of those, who have been most flattered under this title, we shall find, that nothing hath been more frequently mistaken, than the nature of this virtue; that most of the appearances of it have been nothing else but ambition, a love of dominion and tyranny; and that many of those, who have been most honoured as benefactors to their country, have only contributed to its greatness or power by invading the rights of their neighbouring nations; carrying war and desolation into distant countries, and enslaving and oppressing as many, as they could conquer. Among the Romans, where this passion prevailed most,
and

and was held in the highest honour, it was a national principle to conquer and subdue as many countries, as they could.

But if we now compare these principles with that charity, which christianity hath set up as the measure and standard of virtue, or indeed with the common principles of justice and humanity, we shall find, that nothing can be more contrary to the nature of true virtue; that no love of our country can justify oppression and cruelty; and that, where this passion leads men to the ruin of whole cities and countries without any just cause, instead of entitling them to honour, as benefactors to their country, it ought to render them the objects of public horror and aversion, as the common enemies of mankind.

It will therefore perhaps be worth our while to consider more distinctly the nature of this virtue, and to inquire in what the merit of it consists, and what are the duties implied in it.

By our country, when we consider it as the object of our affection, is certainly meant that body of men, who are united with us in one community, under the same laws and government, and in a league

league of mutual defence and support. And, as the end of this union in all government is the common interest and good of the whole, a love of our country implies in it, first, a steady regard to this common or public interest; and secondly, to those laws of union, that form of polity or constitution, which are fixed upon us as the best means for promoting this end. This public affection is in some degree natural to the mind of man: and to see what there is of virtue in it, we must consider the several principles upon which it is commonly built.

And first; That social principle, which God hath implanted in us, and which makes us delight in a mutual intercourse with each other, naturally leads us to love those, with whom we converse. A similitude of life and manners, an agreement in customs, opinions and language, and (which is the case in some particulars of all those who are united in society) an agreement in the same common interest; all these are a natural foundation for love and affection. They work mechanically on the mind; and consequently, as far as these are concerned in raising our public affections, there is no virtue or merit in

in them: they are the fruits of self-love, and are common to the worst of men, as well as the best.

Secondly; Another natural foundation for this love of our country are the several alliances of friendship and natural relation, by which the members of the same community are always united together. The natural affections, which bind together those of the same kindred and family,

—————The charities
Of father, husband, brother,—

all conspire to promote and strengthen this public principle in us; like so many streams, that increase and swell the channel which receives them. This is mentioned by our royal author himself, as a motive of endearment to his country, in the verse which follows the text: "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." Here this affection begins to appear amiable; it is founded upon a virtuous principle, and will be found to rise highest upon these motives in the best and most inge-

ingenuous tempers. Yet these are passions natural to the mind of man; self-love hath a great share in them; and consequently to be so far influenced by a love of our country argues but a low degree of virtue. It is certain too, that these may sometimes give the mind a quite contrary direction, and strongly incline us to the prejudice of our country. There are many instances, in which the interest of our dearest friend or relation ought to be sacrificed to the public good. We must therefore look for some farther and steadier principle to build this duty upon.

A third principle then, upon which the love of our country may be rationally founded, is the protection, which it gives us in our just rights and liberties. This indeed, as far as our own interest is concerned in it, is a private or selfish principle, and hath nothing of that public spirit, which we are enquiring after. But if we consider it not as a narrow concern for our own interests, but for the natural rights in common of all our fellow citizens and countrymen; if we are ready to defend their lives and properties at the hazard of our own; if we are ready

dy to oppose ourselves the foremost against the invasions of foreign, or the usurpations of domestic tyranny; this is plainly virtue of the highest and most disinterested kind. A love of our country is in these instances a love of justice, a love of charity, a desire to contribute to the welfare and happiness of all about us, and to protect them from wrong and oppression.

Here then is the foundation of that virtue, which is so deservedly applauded in this character. It consists in a generous regard to the common happiness and welfare of mankind, exemplified particularly in the society or community, in which we live; which is certainly the noblest cause, in which the heart of man can be engaged, and in which he, who deserves the name of patriot, must think his fortune and life well lost.

A love of our country then, where this passion hath such an object, as it can perfectly acquiesce in, implies in it a love of the laws and constitution, by which it is governed: and that government has the best right to our affection and service, in which the common rights of mankind are best secured, and protected

ted to us. Here then let us apply this observation to our own use and instruction.

There never was perhaps a country or government in the world where the natural liberties and enjoyments of mankind were more effectually secured to all the members of it, than that under which we live. It is our happiness not to be governed by the arbitrary will of an absolute monarch, but by laws of our own making; to have the administration of these laws in the hands of a prince, who owns himself their subject, and who never has in any one instance assumed a power of altering, repealing or suspending the force of them; which, as it is a happiness unknown to most other countries, so, however it was claimed as the right of Englishmen, was yet never experienced in fact among them, till that happy revolution, which freed us at once from the apprehensions of popery, and its inseparable attendant, arbitrary power.

And this leads me to mention another blessing of the highest value to our country, and that is the free possession of the purest religion in the world: the interest of which is inseparably connected with

that constitution and government, by which it is protected and established. They have both the same common enemies, and must stand or fall together. This therefore is another consideration, which ought greatly to endear our country to us; and which the royal psalmist likewise mentions, as a ground of his pious affection to Jerusalem: "Yea, because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." Upon the whole, we have in the security of our civil and religious rights every public advantage in the highest perfection, that any nation can boast of; and consequently, if the love of our country be in any circumstances a duty, it is in an extraordinary manner binding upon us; and it is with great reason, that this generous principle has hitherto so eminently prevailed, and will, I hope, always prevail amongst us.

What are the proper expressions of this affection, or the duties implied in this character, may be easily collected from what has been said. They are, in our several stations to promote the common interest of our country; to be obedient to the government we are under;
and

and to serve diligently the offices, assigned us in it. It must be left to those, who are distinguished by a public character, and who are blessed with talents and abilities, equal to the charges they sustain, to shine as patriots to their country; to protect it by their councils, and defend it by their courage. But it is the duty of every common subject to submit peaceably to the laws of that government he is under, and that not only for wrath, or a fear of punishment, but for conscience sake: it is his duty to strengthen the hands of the government; to remove every impediment out of its way; and not to weaken it by spreading faction and discontent among the people; and lastly, to contribute chearfully his proportion of those supplies, which the exigencies of the state may make it necessary to demand.

The particular duties, to which the love of our country at present calls us, and which I was in the last place to consider, are those of humbling ourselves under a sense of those sins, which may have provoked God to withdraw his mercy from us; and imploring the assistance and blessing of heaven on his majesty's

arms; which have been taken up, not upon a vain principle of ambition, to gratify the resentment of an angry, or the pride of an aspiring monarch; but in defence of the plainest rights, and such as all mankind have ever claimed, at the call of a provoked and long-injured people; and after every other method of redress had been tried in vain. But though from the goodness of our cause, as well as the wisdom of our councils, and the strength of our fleets and armies, we have the most reasonable hope of success; yet it is a truth, which reason and experience, as well as religion, teach us, that “the
 “race is not always to the swift, nor the
 “battle to the strong:” that the event of all things is in the hand of God; and more especially, that the fate of nations is weighed and determined by him. If therefore in the common occurrences of life it is our wisdom and interest, as well as our duty, to look up to heaven for a blessing on our labours and endeavours; it is certainly a far more indispensable duty in us on occasions of so great importance. A presumptuous confidence in our own strength might itself justly provoke God to give us up into the hands
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of our enemies ; and on the other hand, a pious trust in his mercy may be a powerful means to draw down his blessing and assistance in our favour. Thus “the children of Israel were brought down,” says the scripture, “in that day, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the Lord their God.” Let us then not build too much upon human prospects ; or shut God out of our councils and designs ; but let us flee humbly to him for succour in a pious acknowledgment, that without him “nothing is strong ;” that without him “no king can be saved by the multitude of an host ; nor the mightiest man be delivered by his strength.” Our Popish enemies have probably their tutelar saints to apply to on this occasion. Let us leave them to their protection ; and let us chuse on our part the Lord for our God. “In his name will we set up our banners,” who alone giveth victory unto kings, and saveth from the peril of the sword.

But farther a second duty, to which the piety and wisdom of our superiors hath at present called us, is that of humbling ourselves in the sight of God under

a sense of our sins, lest they should provoke him to withdraw his mercy from us.

It was given in especial charge to the people of Israel, and made a part of their law, that, when the host went forth against the enemy, then they should keep themselves from every wicked thing. If they expected God should declare for them in the day of war, they were to sanctify themselves to the Lord, and to put away all evil from among them. And a like religious rule was very generally observed among the Heathen; they had certain purifyings and lustrations always performed by their whole armies, before they led them to battle. It was thought necessary before the determination of so great events, on which the fate of nations is usually suspended, to avert the displeasure, and deprecate the anger of Heaven, by a more than ordinary solemnity of religious worship. For the same pious reasons we are called upon in the duty of this day together with our devotions to enter upon a reformation of life and manners, in order to procure the favour of Heaven to our cause. In
vain

vain we offer up our prayers to God, if we continue in a state of disobedience to his laws. If we expect the blessing of Heaven to attend us, we must endeavour to procure it. If we would make God our friend, we must forsake those sins, which set us at enmity with him.

A life of holiness and virtue is at all times necessary to recommend our prayers to God; but nothing less than a national virtue is sufficient to secure those general and extensive blessings of his Providence, which he hath promised to a righteous nation. The Scriptures are very full in declaring, and the history of the Jewish nation is a continual witness of it, that the dispensations of God towards public bodies and communities of men are always adjusted and determined by the good, or evil, that prevails among them.

“ At what instant he speaks concerning
“ a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to
“ pluck up, and to pull down, and to
“ destroy it; if that nation, against whom
“ he hath pronounced, turn from their
“ evil way, he will repent of the evil,
“ that he thought to do unto them. And
“ at what instant he speaks concerning

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“ a na-

“ a nation, and concerning a kingdom,
 “ to build, and to plant it; if it do evil
 “ in his sight, and obey not his voice,
 “ then he will repent of the good, where-
 “ with he said he would benefit them.
 “ He createth peace, and maketh war.
 “ He turneth a fruitful land into barren-
 “ ness for the wickedness of them, that
 “ dwell therein;” and on the other hand,
 in favour of an obedient people, “ He
 “ maketh the wilderness a standing wa-
 “ ter, and water-springs out of a dry
 “ ground.”

Let us then take this occasion to re-
 flect on the present state of virtue and re-
 ligion among us. It is, I am afraid, such
 as can give us no just confidence in the fa-
 vour of God. The purity of our faith
 and worship does indeed very much ex-
 cel that of our enemies; but we cannot
 suppose the worst of our enemies to live
 worse than a great part of us do. The
 principles of religion were perhaps never
 more rationally explained, or more justly
 directed to their true end and aim, the
 promoting of piety and virtue in the
 world, than they generally are among
 us: that venerable simplicity, which re-
 commended christianity at its first ap-
 pearance,

pearance, seems almost revived. But can it be said, that religion hath gained in the same proportion in the esteem and reverence of those, who are taught it in this purity? On the contrary, is it not true, that, as we have rectified our faith and opinions, we have sunk in our piety and morals? Is not the worship of God here most neglected, where it is most free from error and superstition? Is not indeed a want of religion and principle the distinguishing character of the times and country we live in? Are not the forms of piety and restraints of temperance openly scorned and derided by many among us? And are not those sins, which are forbid to be once named among christians, committed without shame or fear, and even with boasting and triumph? Certainly if this is our case, we ought seriously to attend to the great danger we are in; to consider how we may avert the judgments of God, which threaten us; and recall that spirit of piety and virtue, which alone can save us.

Great indeed and difficult is the undertaking to reform a corrupt age, but

we should therefore apply ourselves to the work with a diligence, suitable to the importance and necessity of it. Let those, who are in authority, shew their zeal in executing the laws for that purpose; in suppressing the public and known temptations to lewdness and debauchery; and in punishing that profaneness, which triumphs openly in our streets. Let those, whose rank and character give weight to their example, shew their sense of religion by a constant attendance upon the offices of it, and by a strict sobriety of life and manners; that so others may be won by their conversation to think on the evil of their ways. Let us every one contribute his endeavour to reduce and lessen the weight of public guilt by at least reforming and amending himself, and unite in our prayers, and in every good work, that "God may be entreated for the land." So may we yet piously hope, that God will "go forth with our armies, and command deliverances for Jacob;" that through him "we shall cast down our enemies, and keep them under, that rise up against us." So shall we not only consult the peace and prosperity of this our Jerusalem, but
"shall

shall provide in the best manner for our future peace and happiness in a better country, and shall be received as true sons and citizens of that "Jerusalem, which is above."

Let this then be thought to deserve our whole attention, in which both our present and everlasting interests are concerned. Let it be our great endeavour to procure the favour of God to ourselves, and, as far as our prayers and personal obedience can prevail, to our country. And may we all so live, united by the bonds of piety and charity here, as to be admitted hereafter into "the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem," there to live for ever in the happy rank and character of fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

S E R M O N XII.

ON FALSE AND TRUE PLEASURE;

AN INFIRMARY SERMON.

PROVERBS III. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness.

THERE is a variety of principles which, by turns, have been found to predominate in human nature; and which, according to the revolutions of times and manners, have been observed,
suc-

ſucceſſively, to ſway the conduct of mankind. In one age, a ſenſe of religion, and duty, hath generally prevailed: in another, the proſpect of future glory: in a third, the contracted views of intereſt and cunning: in a fourth, the diſſolute maxims of luxury and pleaſure.

I think it may, without any imputation of prejudice or partiality, be affirmed, that the laſt of theſe is the peculiar and leading principle of the preſent times. Thoſe of duty and glory have had their day: they have, by turns, reigned, and been exploded: that of intereſted cunning, it muſt be owned, is yet in force; but this ſubſiſts rather as a means, than an end: we are cunning, indeed, and laborious to heap up; but we only heap up, that we may ſquander. Immediate gratification is the great object of purſuit; and futurity is loſt, amidſt our eagereſs for preſent enjoyment.

Hence it hath come to paſs, that even religion and virtue can only gain acceſs to the debauched imagination, upon ſuch conditions as are almoſt unworthy of their native excellence; and while, in happier ages, they could draw mankind to their party, by holding forth a crown
of

of eternal glory, as the prize of their high calling, they are now reduced to that last necessity of alluring their supine votaries, by pointing out the near and flow'ry path of pleasure.

Yet even on this low principle, religion and virtue, if fairly listened to, will baffle all opposition: for such is their uniform nature, and extensive energy; so entire and universal is their influence, with respect to man; that present pleasure, no less than future happiness, is their essential and unvaried characteristic. Lest therefore we should proceed on principles which by some might be esteemed chimerical and groundless, let us consider them, chiefly at least, in this single light; and, from this examination, I doubt not but it will appear, first, that no true or lasting pleasure is, or can be obtained, without the practice of Virtue; secondly, that from the sincere practice of it, the truest and most lasting pleasures do naturally arise; and, lastly, from these truths, a few observations will offer themselves to our consideration, relative to the present occasion.

First, therefore, it will appear to every considerate mind, that no true and lasting
pleasure

pleasure is, or can be obtained, without the practice of Virtue.

Yet here, even some of the grossest vices put in their claim, and pretend to conduct their Followers to true pleasure: but, in the end, it will appear, that their pretences are the completest, as they are the most fatal, of all delusions. Debauchery and intemperance bring their own punishments along with them: they destroy the health of the body, and all the powers of the mind. Luxury and prodigality are no less fatal to our fortunes: every violation of the social duties is attended with some imbittering or ruinous circumstance. If we are arbitrary, oppressive, or uncharitable, though we be so cautious as to evade the laws, yet a just and public ignominy will overtake us: if we avowedly violate the rules of justice, by theft, robbery, or plunder, that justice we have defied will overwhelm us, and our reward must be fines or imprisonment, banishment or death. Thus, the natural inheritance of every grosser vice, is misery and ruin: by turns they lead their votaries from poverty to want, from disease to rottenness, from jails to gibbets.

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This part of the subject might be much enlarged on: but I would hope, that to have touched upon it in this general manner, may, at present, be sufficient: I would hope, that none who appear on this humane and charitable occasion, can be the declared and determined enemies of virtue. I would therefore address you, as those who mean well, but who yet may be mistaken; as those who may unknowingly have wandered from the path of virtue and true pleasure, and may possibly therefore thank the warning voice, that bids them return and walk in it.

Give me leave, therefore, to represent to you, the folly of expecting true and permanent pleasure, from a violent attachment to what is generally called even innocent diversion or amusement, in exclusion of the higher pursuits of benevolence and virtue.

Now the first circumstance which demonstrates that what is called mere diversion, or amusement, cannot be a sufficient source of true continued pleasure, is this: that if we pursue them constantly, they grow tedious and tiresome; and if we intermit them, they give us pain
rather

rather than pleasure, in reflection. That they grow tiresome when long pursued, is clear from that perpetual rotation, which is found necessary to relieve the nauseating mind. Were they of such a nature as to satisfy the soul of man, should we need to labour after a perpetual change? We read in ancient history, of a kingdom sunk to such a degree of effeminacy, that a royal reward was proclaimed for him, who should find out a new pleasure: and do you think that a new one would have been sought at such expence, had not all the old ones been exhausted? Even such seems to be our present situation: we toil, like children in pursuit of rainbows, after chimerical and air-painted objects of delight: when we come upon the spot, we find, that what at a distance appeared so gay, had but a false splendor, which is vanished on a nearer approach. Yet still, as new objects rise before us, we renew our pursuit, find ourselves again deceived, and thus pass our time between expectation and disappointment.

And as this eager appetite for mere diversion affords but little of true pleasure, even in the period of enjoyment;
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so, when that is over, reflection intrudes and makes us miserable: for the mind having been either lost in total dissipation, or intent on objects but ill suited to its nature, when it comes to look at home, finds nothing to support or rest itself upon. Where there is no inward consciousness of worthy designs, and suitable actions, the mind turns with aversion from beholding itself; and thus leisure and thought, two of the greatest blessings that can be vouchsafed to those who know how to use them, become a burthen unsupportable. Hence every false and dissipating pleasure is again greedily embraced; and we seek not so much to obtain delight, as to get rid of misery.

This farther circumstance may be added, with regard to those who are not quite abandoned in their principles; that an immoderate attachment to diversions does, upon the whole, in the strictest sense, partake of the nature of vice: for though the temperate pursuit of a single amusement may be innocent, so long as it leaves room for pursuits of a higher nature; yet when the soul becomes totally immersed in trifling or idle gratifications, the superior faculties of the mind
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lie dormant and neglected. The seeds of virtue, though they be sown by nature in the human mind, do yet require some degree of labour and cultivation, ere they can put forth their branches, and produce good fruit: but by this untoward management, instead of aiding their natural efforts, we overwhelm and choak them in their first growth; and thus give the start to the latent seeds of corruption, which infallibly spring up in tares and thistles. Thus the native energy of the soul is destroyed, the duties of life are not so much as thought of, and all improvement in religion and virtue rendered utterly impossible. Hence, I say, as an immoderate attachment to diversion tends to extinguish every degree of virtue, it partakes, in the strictest sense, of the nature of vice, and will therefore stand exposed to all its consequences.

So much may justly be affirmed of every amusement, even the most innocent. But there is one, much indeed sought after at present, with a view to pleasure, which surely, of all others, has the least pretence to it; and which, above every other, repays its blind followers with
vexation

vexation and disappointment: I mean, that of immoderate gaming.

To analyze it therefore into its principles: the very best consequence that could be hoped for, even supposing what is impossible, a continued run of fortune; the very best, I say, that can be hoped, would be an inordinate lust of gain: for, it is always observed, that the successful, in this way, grow proportionably covetous: hence arises a certain eagerness, a restless craving of the mind, after an object which can never satisfy it. And even this, ignoble as it is, is deeply tinged with perpetual doubts, and the fear of a reverse of fortune: hence the most distressful anxiety arises; the inward peace and balance of the mind is destroyed, and the distracted heart set at variance with itself.

But this is a very weak and imperfect picture of a gaming table: for, as the tide of fortune ebbs, at least as often as it flows, so the sad reverse, to which every adventurer is exposed, awakens by turns every gloomy and accursed passion of the soul. Here we may often see a numerous assembly of both sexes chained down by the magic of the fatal circle;
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the forcerer seated triumphant in the midst, with his instruments of deceit before him: at length the spell begins to work, and the engine of falshood is put in motion: the enchanted crowd stand fixed with anxious eyes and beating hearts, till, in the end, fate proclaims the magician victorious; who, by secret and unsuspected arts, hath conveyed the wealth of his followers into his own pocket; leaving them nothing in return but the just reward of grief and vexation, indignation and remorse.

Do not we see men passing their best hours, and their prime of life, in these scenes of folly; whose rank, fortunes, and natural abilities might entitle them to the highest offices in the commonwealth? Degrading themselves to the low level of professed gamesters, and herding with these, as their chief intimates, their bosom friends? Blind to every kind of merit, but that of the learned artist, whose boasted qualification is, that he is both able and willing to ease them of the useless burthen of an estate. Yet, fond as they are of this mad extravagance in theory, the practice of it is attended with the most consummate

summate misery. The same conflict of tormenting passions, as hath already been described, rises to blast their unwarrantable pleasures; and their false pursuits too generally conclude with cursing themselves, and blaspheming Providence. Here then behold the wretch compleated! Surrounded by a train of inextricable miseries! his fortune vanished, beyond redemption! "He cannot work; and to beg he is ashamed:" he hath disgraced his ancestors, and ruined his posterity: behind him, he sees nothing but guilt and shame; before him, nothing but misery and despair. What then remains, but that he throw the last fatal dye for eternity, and conclude the horrid scene by a halter, a dagger, or a pistol!

Or if his fury, horror, and despair, break not forth upon himself, they are sure to discharge themselves on his fellow-creatures. His intemperate wants call aloud for gratification; and force must restore, what folly deprived him of. Hence those evils which are rising with unheard of aggravations: hence these "complainings in our streets:" hence the spirit of violence hath gone out among

mong us; and the land is filled with robbery and murder.

It may seem strange that such excesses should be allowed in a free state: but it is yet more strange, that such excesses should be allowed and practised among the great, at a time when there are laws in force against them. And do those act the part of magistrates, of legislators, of patriots, or of men, who either by a toleration, by encouragement, or example, thus wantonly set at defiance the very laws which themselves have made or recommended? Can true pleasure, or satisfaction, arise from a conduct so inconsistent with itself? Or, can the leading part of mankind ever hope, that their inferiors will reverence the laws, while they see their superiors publicly despise them? Hence, I fear, many of our greatest evils flow; and hence, I fear, much greater are to be expected. A learned heathen, a man equally renowned as a captain, a philosopher, and politician; this great person informs us, that nothing was so remarkable in the famed Lacedemonian republic, as that perfect and entire submission given to the laws by the greatest people and highest

est ranks of the commonwealth: he accounts for the stability and long duration of that republic from this one principle, above all others; and tells us, that this circumstance no sooner ceased, than the Lacedemonian state partook of the common fate of empires. How far this observation may relate to our own times and country, I am unwilling to say. They whom it more nearly concerns, must be better judges: and sure it behoves them seriously to reflect upon it. I would not designedly be either timid or presuming. But this is certain, and this mine office obliges me to say, that the united voices of all ages and nations do proclaim this truth, that a general and open contempt of established laws among the higher ranks of men, hath always been a preceding symptom, a certain indication, of the approaching dissolution of a state. If, therefore, you prefer a well-grounded and lasting, to a transient and short-lived pleasure; if you have any regard for your country and posterity; if your passion for low and selfish gratifications hath not effaced the natural impressions of humanity; “ finally,

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“ever things are just, whatsoever things
 “are lovely, whatsoever things are of
 “good report, if there be any virtue, if
 “there be any praise, think of these
 “things.”

In consequence of these reflections, which demonstrate how fatally we are misled in our pursuits of pleasure, let me now in conclusion point out the real, and let me add, the easy method of obtaining it. And this will be found to consist in the sincere practice of every Virtue; or, in other words, in the unfeigned exercise of Christian Charity, which is declared to be “the end of the commandment.”

But here it may be proper first to inquire, why, if true virtue and true charity be the same; why, in an age confessedly not wanting in a spirit of charity and benevolence, so little true and substantial virtue should be found?

This, though perhaps at first view a difficult question, yet admits of a very easy solution from two causes, arising from the same blind principle of present gratification; for, in the first place, though we want not the feelings of benevolence, when an object of pity strikes
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our eyes, yet we have so many views of false pleasure and amusement; so many calls of a meaner and more selfish kind to gratify, as not only lessen our desire of relieving the distress we see, but infallibly prevent any care or inquiry after such objects as fall not beneath our notice. In a word; though to relieve the pain in our own breast, we relieve a present object of distress, yet we do it not upon any steady principle, and therefore must ever do it in such a manner as is partial and defective.

The other reason is, because at present there generally prevails a very imperfect idea of the nature of charity: for whereas it consists in a steady and sincere desire of promoting the happiness of all mankind; the common notion is, that the whole lies in relieving an object of distress. Hence we see multitudes who seem to think themselves charitable, while they give way to every vile inclination, except only that of a hardened heart. Hence we see the one sex triumphing in a single act of compassion, as the sum of all virtue, while they indulge in debauchery, prophaneness, and revenge: and the other think themselves

perfectly charitable, while they riot in envy, in calumny, and slander.

But far different is the true idea of christian charity. St. Paul tells us, that “though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, we are nothing.” But, that the true fruit of the spirit is “love, joy, long-suffering, kindness, patience, temperance”: that “charity envieth not, is not puffed up, not easily provoked, seeketh not her own, rejoiceth not in evil, but rejoiceth in the truth; hopeth, believeth, and endureth all things.”

It is from this blessed and heavenly temper of mind, that true and lasting pleasure is to be expected: it is this that conquers every turbulent and uneasy passion; and, like its divine author, “subdues all things unto itself.” This heavenly temper, which we need only wish for, to be possessed of, gives that calm and lasting joy to its possessor, which is sought for in vain by the gay and the licentious. It partakes not of the nature of amusements, which often disgust even when we seek them; but every additional act, nay, every sincere wish of kindness which we bestow, raiseth

us to still higher and higher degrees of pleasure, which flows upon the mind in proportion as the mind grows more virtuous. Then indeed, those very amusements which otherwise can afford nothing but disappointment, do in an inferior degree become the means of real pleasure: we shall not, indeed, think so highly of them; but neither, on the other hand, shall we be baulked in our expectations: for as we shall set no higher value upon them, than what in their nature they deserve; so we shall reap from them all that satisfaction which they can, or were designed to give us. They will then be as so many tributary streams of pleasure, flowing in and uniting with the great one of Charity and Virtue.

Neither is the pleasure which true virtue and unlimited charity afford, confined like that of false pleasure, to the short period of action. It is their peculiar nature, not to lose their force, but to increase, to double by reflection. Here, indeed, lies their great and essential superiority over every other source of delight: for, as the busy mind will often descend into itself; so the vain, the capricious, the idle, the licentious, when

thought drags them homewards, in spite of their follies, they wander through themselves as through an empty and desolate habitation, "seeking rest and finding none." But the truly virtuous can always find a friend at home; a faithful and domestic friend, his own conscience. In this happy commerce he finds unceasing pleasure; here he can pass hours, and days, without looking out for one empty or foreign amusement. This affords that still-increasing satisfaction, gives that perfect repose, that divine contentment to the soul, which fills up the whole capacity for bliss, and leaves not even a wish for more.

And as every branch of virtue and unfeigned charity is a source of the purest and most lasting pleasure; so, in a peculiar manner, is that most essential part of it, which I am at present called upon to recommend: I mean that of relieving the distressed.

In that last period of affliction, common to the greatest and the least; when neither wealth, palaces, attendance, titles, nor distinction, can yield you comfort; when every outward support shall fail you, then shall this
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source of lasting pleasure break forth with double vigour in the mind; and when every other foundation gives way, this reflection will still bear you up, even in sickness and in death, that you had relieved the distresses of your fellow-creatures; that you had been "eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame;" that "the blessing of him that was ready to perish had come upon you;" and that "you had caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

Finally; If you cast up your eyes to heaven, and contemplate the happiness there prepared for the just and merciful, you will find such pleasures attending on your virtue, as nothing on earth can either rival or represent; "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Thus in every light are charity and happiness centred, through every period of our existence. The joys of vanity, or vice, are like hasty brooks, noisy and impetuous, but of no duration: those of true charity, virtue, and religion, are like clear and constant streams, calm and majestic in their course; they

run uninterrupted through life, they shall be continued beyond the grave; and not only continued, but augmented into "rivers of joy, which shall flow at God's right hand for evermore."

S E R M O N XIII.

THE BENEFIT OF VISITING THE HOUSE
OF MOURNING;

A FUNERAL SERMON.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 2.

*It is better to go to the house of mourning,
than to go to the house of feasting.*

THIS observation of Solomon will,
I am persuaded, appear very ex-
travagant to the generality of mankind,
who are too averse to grave and serious

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reflec-

reflections, and given up to thoughtlessness and gaiety. They seem to think that they were made for no higher end than to gratify their appetites, and pass away their time in a continual circle of vanity and pleasure; and therefore every thing that has a solemn aspect, and damps the sprightliness and levity of their minds, is either industriously avoided, or, if it falls in their way, soon diverted by a hurry of business, trifling amusements, or fresh pursuits of luxury. It is upon this account that religion itself, which is the perfection of human nature, and renders it truly great and amiable, and of consequence must be the only foundation of exalted, uniform, and manly pleasure; that religion, I say, which ennobles and composes the mind, and can alone support it under all the various and unequal scenes of life, is represented as a peevish, enslaving, melancholy scheme of enthusiasm, that sours our tempers, and obliges us to unnecessary severities, and consequently is unfit for any to concern themselves with, but those who are either weary of life, or past relishing the enjoyments of it. Such sentiments are apt especially to prevail in the heat of youth, when

when the spirits are brisk and lively, and the passions head-strong and impetuous.

It is indeed very strange, that men, who are reasonable creatures, should esteem it either their honour or privilege to be excused from thinking about matters of the highest importance; or, that they should be fond of laying aside their reason, and giving an unbounded scope to sensual and irregular passions, when the exercise of thought and reflection is both the peculiar dignity, and happiness of their nature. But it is an undeniable fact, that they greatly affect a gay, indolent life, and do not care to converse much with such objects as have a solemnity and awfulness attending them, and naturally dispose men for serious consideration, and an impartial review of their conduct. And from this source proceed the greatest errors and disorders in human life.

But amongst all the graver subjects that can employ our thoughts, there is nothing so mortifying to light and sensual minds, as the contemplation of death. Reflections upon mortality, and the shortness, and infinite uncertainty of the present

sent being, afford such persons none but disagreeable and gloomy prospects. They represent to them strongly the emptiness of their most admired and applauded pleasures, and teach them that all the gay scenes of pomp and luxury, with which they are so highly delighted, will soon vanish. They put them upon considering what is the great end of life, and what will be the consequence of their behaviour after death, which has a natural tendency to create such uneasy suspicions and terrors, as will be a great check to the freedom of their vicious excesses. And yet those melancholy occurrences, in which we converse, as it were, immediately with death, and have a visible proof of the uncertainty and transitoriness of all worldly honour, grandeur, and pleasure, are what Solomon had chiefly in view when he says, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go the house of feasting;" as is evident from the words which immediately follow, "For that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart." And, I doubt not, but it will appear from the ensuing observations, that this remark is founded on a just knowledge and experience of human

man nature, how extravagant soever it may seem to the giddy and unthinking, and however contrary it is to the genius, and inclinations of the loose and voluptuous part of mankind.

Are we then, it may be asked, to give ourselves up to melancholy, and pass our days in a gloomy retirement from the world, and refuse to enjoy those conveniences and agreeable accommodations, which the wise and gracious Author of nature hath furnished out for us? Or is it our duty to let our thoughts dwell chiefly on the dark side of life, on instances of distress and mortality? I answer, by no means. Religion is very far from being an enemy to lawful pleasure, and instead of destroying that innocent cheerfulness and vivacity of temper, which renders us more fit for discharging both the duties of piety, and the offices of benevolence and friendship, lays the most natural and solid foundation for it. It is not, therefore, the design of the wise man in the text, to discourage any thing of this kind, which is consistent with the severest rules of virtue; but only to condemn men's spending the greatest part of their time in idle mirth and luxury, that
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licentious and exorbitant pleasure which, instead of being used as a relaxation, to ease and unbend the spirits, is pursued as the main end of life, and leaves none, or but very little room for those more solid and useful contemplations and exercises, which so highly become us as reasonable beings, and creatures expecting a state of immortality.

We are not absolutely forbid "to go to the house of feasting;" nor are we to consider the words as prescribing an universal rule, that holds true in every circumstance, and with respect to all complexions and tempers. For the author of this book has himself observed in another part of it, that "to every thing there is a season, a time to laugh," as well as "a time to weep;" and the true wisdom of mankind lies in improving the proper occasions for both. This is following nature, and making the right use of life. And in all cases, where the spirits are depressed, and the mind over-run with gloom and melancholy, a wise man would think it very absurd and unnatural to recommend "the house of mourning;" and rather advise, on the contrary, that care be taken to avoid, as much as possible,

possible, all such dismal mortifying scenes, as have a tendency, instead of removing, to feed and strengthen this unhappy distemper, which renders men a burden to themselves, a constant uneasiness and trouble to their friends, and, oftentimes, quite useless to society. So that if we interpret these words of Solomon with such limitations and exceptions, as the nature of the thing itself plainly directs to, and which are absolutely necessary to make him a rational, and consistent writer, the sense of them must be somewhat to this purpose: that though the joy of a festival be, in itself, very innocent, frequently very becoming; "to go to the house of mourning," when proper occasions present themselves, is, in general, and except to a few dark, dejected, and gloomy tempers, much more improving; and that, instead of giving a loose to sensual mirth and luxury, we should act a much wiser part, if we conversed sometimes with mournful objects, and solemn appearances of death, which will call in our wandering thoughts, and fix them on the most important subjects; the due consideration of which will, probably, be attended with

with very great and lasting advantages. This is the point which I am now to explain, and improve.

And, in general, while we pursue a constant round of gaiety and pleasure, we are in great danger of contracting an habitual levity of mind. The bulk of mankind are too much disinclined to serious thought, even about points that are of the utmost consequence to their happiness. Their passions are too apt to get the ascendant, so as to hinder them from attending, as they ought, to the dictates of reason and religion. They therefore always want something to balance the mind, and keep it steady; something that will put them upon thinking, instead of occasions to divert them from it. But a continued succession of amusing objects, and agreeable entertainments, instead of being a help to grave and useful reflection, is the most likely thing in the world to prevent it, as it engrosses their attention, and fixes it on trifles. So that the persons who are very much addicted to pleasures have scarce any time for consideration; or if they had, the mind being captivated and bewitched by them, and its faculties enervated

nervated and broken, would find themselves indisposed for thinking at all, or, at least, for thinking to good purpose, on the most important and momentous subjects.

But the conversing with solemn objects, that leave an awful impression upon us, naturally corrects the heat and extravagance of the passions, and makes us cool and deliberate. It both prepares the mind for serious thinking, and suggests proper matter for it. Instances of mortality especially (and the more if they are sudden, and happen in the full strength and vigour of youth; or if it be the death of a friend, of one in affluent circumstances, or remarkable for a virtuous and useful character) must needs be very affecting to every man that has not lost all reflection, and is not quite abandoned to a careless and dissolute life. This I take to be the general ground of Solomon's observation in the text. But because the chief reason why he chose rather "to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting," was, that the former naturally suggests several most important and useful considerations, and is of the utmost advantage in regulating
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our temper and conduct ; all that I shall do farther, to illustrate the truth of this remark, is to shew more particularly what beneficial consequences may reasonably be expected from it.

And first, one advantage of “going to the house of mourning,” is, that it tends to render death familiar to us, or at least, to destroy in a great measure, that extreme dread of it, which operates so visibly in the generality of mankind. Death is one of the stated laws of nature, and what all look upon as a necessary and unavoidable event, and this, one would think, would put every man upon endeavouring after such a degree of resolution and constancy, as will enable him to submit to it decently. Presence and firmness of mind, in a condition that to the bulk of the world is so frightful, is manly, and represents our nature in a worthy and advantageous light ; whereas dejectedness and anxiety, at an event that is natural, and the constitution of an all-wise Providence, must argue either cowardice, or guilt, both of which are dishonourable to human nature. The former of these is likewise very desirable for the comfort of our friends who may survive
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us; and of great use to destroy in others a slavish fear of death, and inspire such a rational contempt of it, as is absolutely necessary to the undertaking and accomplishing many great designs of the utmost service to mankind. Add to this, that it must be an unspeakable happiness to the dying person himself, when his spirits are faint and languid, when the present temporary scenes of honour, wealth, and pleasure are removing for ever from his view, and he is just about to be torn from his most intimate acquaintance, and dearest friends, whose tender and obliging sorrow for the separation, increases the sting of death: it must, I say, be an unspeakable happiness to the dying person himself, in this last extremity of nature, to bear up with steadiness and composure. And as this good effect is very likely to be secured by serious meditations on our mortality, and making the thought of it habitual to the mind, which has a natural tendency to lessen the terrors of death, such reflections must, if it were only for this reason, be of the utmost advantage.

But, by “going to the house of mourning,” we are strongly taught the vanity of
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the world, and the uncertainty of its highest honours, and best enjoyments in every stage of human life. If we are apt to place our confidence in the vigour of youth; if the gaiety of our spirits, and the strength of our passions prompt us to irregular vicious pursuits, let us bring to our view some affecting instance of death happening to a person of a lively and healthful constitution, in the very flower of his days, and see whether it has not a natural tendency to check the heat and forwardness of our tempers, to restrain the insolence of unruly appetites, and damp the eager desire of licentious pleasure.

Moreover, when we see death levelling the rich and great with the poorest and basest of the people, what a contemptible idea does this raise in us of the brightest scenes of worldly prosperity, and grandeur! When we consider all mankind, princes and the meanest of their subjects, conquerors and slaves, renowned statemen and warriors and the most insignificant and obscure, who have left behind them no name, no memorial either of their merit or infamy; when we consider all, I say, of every degree and distinction,

on, blended together in one promiscuous ruin, we shall think very meanly of the several schemes, competitions, and interests, that have, in every age, engaged the chief attention of the world; it will naturally inspire a greatness of temper superior to the little accidents, and vicissitudes of time, and kill all the seeds of ambition and envy. So that a familiar conversation with objects of mortality, and the reflections they naturally excite in us, though they should not make us neglect the world altogether, and pine away life in sullenness and discontent, will give us such a settled indifference towards the highest advantages, honours and pleasures of it, that we shall enjoy them with moderation, and be able to part with them without losing the firmness and constancy of our minds.

As going "to the house of mourning," and serious meditations on death will give us a lively idea of the emptiness and insufficiency of all present pleasures, they must, of course, raise our thoughts above this world, and teach us to expect our happiness hereafter; from moral pleasures that never decay; and in that blessed state, wherein the faculties of the mind

mind will be enlarged and perfected;—where the weight of the sensitive and animal part of our composition shall no longer oppress and bear down the rational nature, and prevent its rising to the noble pursuits of the intellectual and divine life; where we shall have nothing to fear from the insolence of the great, the cruelty of the persecutor, the rage of open enemies, the treachery of pretended friends, or the mischievous schemes of the crafty and designing; where we shall be liable to suffer no uneasiness, injury, or violence from calumniating and slanderous tongues, from peevishness and ill-nature, from pride, envy, revenge, or any other ungoverned and destructive passion; but shall enjoy the highest happiness we are capable of, in society with all the wise and good men that have lived from the beginning of the world, with their several excellencies improved and perfected, and refined from all their defects; and, which is above all other considerations, in the immediate presence of God, and under the influences of his favour, who is the immutable fountain of life, and blessedness:—in short, where we shall sin, and suffer,

suffer, and die no more; but be “as the angels of God in heaven.”

Again; An affecting sense of our mortality will naturally lead us to a just estimate and consideration of human life. We shall look upon it only as a preparatory scene, a state of trial for eternity; and consider ourselves as under the inspection of an all-wise, and almighty Being, who examines every part of our conduct, and is acquainted with our most secret springs and principles of action, and that we must all give an account of ourselves to him, and have our final happiness or misery determined by his righteous judgment. And nothing, surely, can be a more prevailing motive than this to a life of the strictest piety and virtue. Nothing can influence us more strongly to preserve purity of thought and affection, as well as regularity of outward behaviour, and to improve all the abilities and advantages we enjoy in the best manner, as so many talents for which we are answerable to the Supreme Disposer of all things. So that, on many accounts, the observation in the text appears to be highly just and rational, that “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than

“than to go to the house of feasting;” the latter not affording any of those useful reflections, which the former has been shewn so naturally to suggest, for the government of the passions, and conducting our practice.

To all which we may add, that conversing with the awful appearances of death, and serious reflections upon it, however they alarm, and, perhaps, confound and terrify at first, where there is a conscience burdened with guilt, are so far from having a tendency to settle a melancholy habit, and damp the liveliness and vigour of our spirits, that they are likely, in the end, to produce a quite contrary effect. For it has been shewn, that they tend directly to destroy in us an anxious and tormenting fear of death, and to prevent our falling into those vicious irregularities, which are the surest cause of inward confusion, and horror. On the contrary, they afford the strongest arguments for a religious and virtuous life, which is the natural source of cheerfulness, peace, and serenity of mind; and carry our thoughts beyond this vain, uncertain and confused state of things, to an immortal existence, the contempla-
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tion of which must yield the most sublime satisfaction, if there be any remaining sense of the dignity, and large capacities of human nature, heighten all the innocent pleasures of life, and alleviate the afflictions and evils of it.

I might mention some other advantages of "going to the house of mourning," and, particularly, that it softens our tempers, and inspires generous sentiments of humanity and compassion, and consequently, disposes more strongly for discharging the duties of friendship, and all the offices of social life; but I shall only add,

In the last place, that, on these mournful occasions, the good example of those whose death we are particularly called upon to consider and improve, is likely to have a greater influence upon us, and more strongly to excite our imitation. For then, the levity of our tempers being corrected, there is room for calm reflection. We are at leisure to survey the greatness and beauty of a virtuous character; and disposed for meditations of this kind. And the mind, in circumstances that are so solemn and striking, being not only free from prejudice, but

in a peculiar manner tender, and susceptible of good impressions, a worthy and amiable example can hardly fail of provoking our emulation more effectually than at other seasons.

If the present mournful occasion produces these good effects upon us; if it leads us to consider seriously our latter end, reform all our errors and vices, and enter upon a strict, and constant course of virtue, it will lay the foundation of an easy and comfortable life, a serene and peaceful death, and of eternal joy and blessedness hereafter: and then, each of us may say, from his own experience, in the words of the text, “It is better to go
“ to the house of mourning, than to go
“ to the house of feasting.”

S E R M O N XIV.

CONSISTENCY OF THE CHRISTIAN
CHARACTER RECOMMENDED.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

2 TIMOTHY II. 19.

*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ
depart from iniquity.*

A MORE express and positive pre-
cept of religion cannot be enjoined:
the most subtle wit cannot break the
force of this commandment, or interpret

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away

away its plain meaning and spirit. To be pure and guileless, is not merely the dictate of prudence and delicacy, a maxim of convenience, or a caution of interest, but a duty of christianity, which can never be dispensed with. Was thy religion, blessed Lord, ever accused of lessening the obligations of virtue, establishing faith on the ruins of morality, or giving countenance to iniquity? Impious aspersions! "Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it;" and though by believing in him, we have a right to call ourselves by his name, yet, without constant and persevering obedience, we can never approve ourselves his friends and disciples, or expect his final acceptance.

"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." In further discoursing from these words, I only propose to consider, what they directly imply and point out to us, the peculiar obligations christians are under, by the very nature of their profession, to "depart from iniquity," and adorn their character by a holy conversation and godliness.

To

To illustrate this point I observe, first, that we must either renounce iniquity, or disclaim christianity. They are so opposite and inconsistent in their nature, that they can never be reconciled; they subsist and flourish by each other's destruction, and must have an absolute dominion over the heart, or no interest in it at all. It is the very character of our profession, "to deny all ungodliness, and "worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this evil world," without which it is absurd to call ourselves christians.

The religion of Christ is not a fanciful hypothesis, started by a projecting philosopher, or the craft and invention of a politician, or a set of doubtful opinions; it does not consist in entertaining a system of singular and refined notions, which no one ever thought of before: God forbid it should ever degenerate so low. No; it is the art of living well; it is a plan of religious education for immortality, adapted to the heart, and calculated to renew and transform its sentiments; it is a scheme of heavenly conversation, formed on the model of our Saviour's life; and assisted and per-

fectcd by the promises of his word, and influences of his spirit: it takes the deepest root and yields the most amiable fruits when planted in the humble, sincere, penitent soul; and the candid, mild, resigned disposition, is better prepared to receive it, than the ability and capacity of the acutest understanding. It is not sufficient in words and declarations to acknowledge the Lord that bought us, if our allegiance is not confirmed by our deeds, for they are the only genuine and substantial marks of affection we can give. The tenor of our lives, and the temper of our minds, determine our character, and decide the principles which govern us.

Had it been the intention of the Gospel merely to correct the judgment, and explode a few popular mistakes, it would answer all its purposes to entertain just sentiments concerning it; yet we are told we may embrace the purest doctrines, and be free from all errors of opinion, without being finally accepted.

It is dishonouring Christianity to think it has no nobler object in view, than to fill the head with idle speculations, or useless and indifferent notions; it is
framed

framed so as to strike all the powers of the soul, to interest every passion, by setting full before us the joys and miseries of the invisible world: it is an inward conviction of mind, which does not change like other principles, with fashion and custom, but remains steady and uniform in the frowns as well as the smiles of the world, in adversity, affliction, and death. Was it worthy of the Son of God to come down from heaven to introduce a new denomination amongst men, to advance a new system of philosophy, to invent some paradoxes, to enter the lists with philosophers, and furnish subjects for controversy and debate: nothing can be farther from such a design than his Gospel. Alas! that it should ever have been so monstrously interpreted, and so unjustly degraded! Its contents are the same with those of nature and providence: its design concurs with all the dispensations of the divine will that have been made in time past; and the sole object of it is to make men virtuous, happy, and immortal. Can men be Christians then in consequence of a bare assent to its truth? Can they be Christi-

ans, and be actuated by dispositions utterly opposite to its nature and spirit? Its purpose is to promote inward holiness; to save its followers from sin and perdition; to raise up into a pure spotless church, "a peculiar people zealous of good works." Can these ends be answered then by wearing an empty badge of distinction, by calling him Rabbi, Master, Lord? Men may be followers of other teachers from a conformity of opinion, without any alteration of heart or conduct; but they cannot be thine, thou Saviour of sinners, without "departing from all iniquity." Without this we are wanting in the fundamental qualifications of our profession; without this we abolish all title to his friendship, disclaim all communion with his spirit, forfeit all right to his acceptance, and cut ourselves off from the assembly of his people for ever.

Again; We are not only bound to "depart from all iniquity" by the ties of our religion, which is of a practical nature, but by a principle of gratitude, for those obligations which Christ has laid us under. By the discoveries and promises of his Gospel, he has removed
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all those fears, doubts, and difficulties, which terrified, perplexed, and discouraged mankind in the pursuits of virtue; he has drawn aside that veil which concealed the view of future glory, corrected those errors which ignorance had conceived of the majesty of God, and made that conviction of guilt, which before banished us from the throne of heaven, the most powerful motive to drive us thither, and the best foundation of our acceptance. What stronger motives can there be to gratitude? and, what more sincere gratitude, than a life of unblameable obedience? A believer in Moses might be tempted to indulge himself in some offences from a mistaken notion, which the Jews were too apt to fall into, that he could by the sacrifice of his substance atone for the sin of his soul. A follower of the Pagan religion might think to vindicate his irregularities, by pretending that amidst such a number of Gods he knew not which to worship, and so many uncertain opinions, about a future state, he knew not which to believe: But what has an immoral christian to urge in his defence? That he has not sufficient encouragements to renounce iniquity? What can he desire more than the favour

and assistance of God, the forgiveness of his sins, and an eternal recompence of happiness? What does he think of that multitude of precious promises, which belong to the sincere penitent, or of that cloud of witnesses which are perpetually animating him to seek that "better part which shall never be taken from him?" He cannot pretend that his duty is dark and obscure, for he has "line upon line, and precept upon precept." He cannot except against religion as a painful servitude, for "the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light." He cannot maintain that the hopes of immortality are weak and precarious, since they are confirmed to him by all the assurances that God can give, and all the evidence man can receive.

These are very important thoughts; dismiss them not before you have given them a very serious consideration. Let us recollect, that we might have been placed in the lowest rank of human being, limited to the narrowest views of knowledge and happiness, bewildered with doubts and errors, and little advanced above the brutes of the field. Instead of this we can trace the wonders of Providence

dence that have been displayed from the creation of the world, pursue the footsteps of infinite mercy in every revelation of its will, through successive periods, till it was perfectly declared by the Son of God; we can see our beginning and our end, and rejoice in the hope that "all things shall work together for our good." Do not such happy circumstances as these imply uncommon duties, and demand of us peculiar acknowledgments? Yes, our privileges are great, and our gratitude ought to be distinguished; our hopes are boundless, and our danger is terrible. If any person believes that the appearance of Christ was planned by the eternal love of God; that it was attended by every circumstance of tenderness and affection that could make it godlike and divine; that the sole purpose of it was to root sin and misery out of the world; that in effecting this, he laboured with unwearied diligence, contended against passion and prejudice, spent a life of watching and prayer, and at last bowed down his soul unto death; if he believes that this Redeemer, though now exalted to his throne in heaven, still sympathises with his followers, rejoices in their fidelity,

lity, encourages their perseverance, and does not think himself compleatly glorified, till he has gathered all his disciples round him; if he can believe these things, and still persist in iniquity, what he may call himself I know not, but he is not a man, and has not the common principles of human nature. Is it thus that you requite the loving kindness of the Lord, and recompence the favours of your benefactor? You would have been under the great law of nature, by the reason of your own minds; and if your views are enlarged by the light of revelation, your duty and zeal must be proportionably extended. Besides the authority of God, you have your own vows and declarations to answer for, which bind the ties of conscience still stronger, and make it more criminal to disobey. A profession is a public promise made before all the world, which every honest man will think himself as much obliged to fulfil, as any private contract whatsoever. Now he "that nameth the name of Christ," engages to obey his laws, becomes accountable to him for his life and conduct, pledges his honour and veracity in confirmation of his fidelity, enters into covenant

nant with him, in which he parts with the criminal pleasures of the present world, for the pure joys of a future one; and if he fails in his performance, what has he to expect but fiery indignation? The more happy he would be in living up to his profession, the more miserable he must be in renouncing it; the more indulgent the parent who commands, the more ungrateful the son who disobeys; the more excellent the reward, the more bitter the punishment; the more plain and reasonable the commandment, the more inexcusable the breach of it; the more advantages he enjoyed, the more complete and irretrievable must be his final condemnation. These are the dictates of reason; and if we appeal to the testimony of revelation, we shall find them fully confirmed. Is there not, great God, some signal vengeance reserved for those who so ungenerously trample upon thy mercy? Can it be possible that ingratitude, discoloured by so many crimes, and aggravated by so many obligations, can escape with impunity? Can there be the least hope, that the eternal distinctions of justice will be confounded; that the divine goodness will spare

spare its most inveterate enemies; that the threatnings of Scripture are nothing but a dream? Then we may be safe in contemptuously rejecting so great a salvation.

Farther; Let Christians "depart from all iniquity," because this is not only obeying the laws of their master, but being of the same mind, and imitating his example. It is natural to copy the manners of a great preceptor, and we can never be said truly and heartily to embrace his principles, till we imbibe his spirit, and feel his genius transferred into our hearts. Christ was not only the author of the most sublime sentiments, but the pattern of the purest manners; and unless we are transformed into his character, we shall be wanting in the best proofs of friendship and relation. Indeed it is a common observation, that similarity of desires and actions, is the only security of affection and friendship; therefore, let them blush to "name the name of Christ," who have nothing in their natures like him, nothing to give them the least claim to his regard. It is not the external respect they express that will avail:—what do they discover in their actions and lives
worthy

worthy of his notice? The author of their faith was pure, undefiled, and separate from all sin; and, what are they? Polluted with guilt, and enslaved to criminal appetites and passions. Their master was meek, benevolent, and resigned; and incredible as it may seem, they are haughty, envious, revengeful: "his kingdom was not of this world;" not of this world! and what makes his followers then covetous, ambitious, and worldly minded? "His delight was to do the will of him that sent him:" and can you believe it? Their chief end is to gratify their own vicious inclinations, whatever duties and restraints stand in the way. Judge then of the nature of their profession, and the sincerity of their pretensions. The genuine mark of his followers is not any outward distinction, but an inward principle of devotion which is continually forming and moulding their minds into a resemblance of his sacred image. It is not he who pays him the officious compliment of approving his doctrines, that will be adopted into his family and kingdom, "but he who" does the will of his Father who is in heaven." Do not think that his Gospel at-
tested

tested as it is by angels and men, requires the countenance and sanction of your authority. The ark of God wants not your reluctant hand to support it; his religion will stand whether you believe it or no; and if your profession of his name be not sustained by a suitable character, he disdains your idle vote, rejects your pretended alliance, and will be revenged of your perfidious friendship. We may, perhaps, defend his doctrine with acuteness and zeal; and it is well: but what benefit will it be to carry out of the world with us his name only; to have a title which will stand us in no stead; to wear a profession which will be no passport into his presence; to be followers whom he must disown; servants whom he cannot patronise; children whom he must disinherit; friends whom he cannot acknowledge, and whose prayers he will despise in the day of trouble?

Lastly; Let Christians "deny all ungodliness," otherwise they will reflect disgrace upon religion, and injure the cause of Christ which they pretend to respect. It sets iniquity in a horrible and dreadful light, when it is considered,
that

that it extends its fatal effects far and wide, and involves, besides the unhappy person who practises it, many others, who are seduced by its example, into irretrievable ruin. Our conduct will either improve our fellow-creatures, or corrupt them; either glorify or dishonour our Father which is in heaven. A wicked life in a Christian is an indignity upon his Master, and an outrage committed upon the gospel, in the disguise of a friend. It seems to declare either that this religion tolerates and countenances immorality, or that it has not sufficient authority to enforce its own laws, or, that it is very doubtful whether it comes from God or no. If it is liable to such a construction, let us consider the nature of this crime. Is this the recompence the merciful Son of God deserved at our hands? he who was "meek and lowly in heart," who never did injury to man;—injury! he who did nothing but acts of kindness; who was never more happy than when he was wiping away the tears of affliction, and binding up the broken-hearted. Lessening his reputation, is standing up against the interests of mankind, joining all the enemies of human

man

man nature, violating the first dictates of justice; a conduct which every generous heart must resent.

Perhaps ye who deny nothing to religion, but the testimony and honour of an upright heart, would not dare in so many words to call Christianity a cunningly devised fable: you would shudder at the thoughts of shaking the credit of those principles upon which man's happiness so greatly depends; you would be the last to reject revelation upon the authority of a few difficulties, which present themselves to all human inquiries. Astonishing inconsistency! you do the cause of Christ more harm than all the infidels in the world: their objections have been answered times without number; but, who can answer that drawn from the wicked lives of those who call themselves Christians? Integrity and good sense will be a sufficient security against the subtlety and refinement of evil-minded men; but, what shall guard even the most honest against the doubts and scruples which bad examples suggest?

Let our adversaries bring all their forces into the field: let them erect their strong holds, and point all their rage
against

against the sincere believer: vain madness! he cannot fall, he is founded upon a rock. But, when he sees the hypocrite putting on the mask of piety more fatally to deceive; to-day celebrating the festival of his Lord, and to-morrow the revels of sin; saluting the Redeemer with words sweeter than honey, and reviling him with actions bitterer than gall; he is staggered and confounded at so strange a conduct; he is shocked at the inconsistency of human nature; he wonders such ingratitude is not punished by avenging Heaven; he distrusts the influence of that religion which cannot stand against a single temptation; his zeal abates; his perplexities croud upon his mind; his heart misgives him; he is reproached for another's crimes; what can he say? I thought religion to be something more than a name. Gracious God, relieve his mind. Alas! it is too late; he has made the last unhappy resolution; his enemies rejoice, his friends weep; religion has lost an advocate, and the world has one triumph more:—but,—his blood will be required at your hands.

To believe all Christianity teaches, and to neglect all its commands, is in effect asserting,

asserting, that notwithstanding the strictness of its laws, and the severity of its terms, it can dispense with obedience sometimes ; and admits members to its communion upon much easier conditions, than is generally imagined. It asperges the author of truth with establishing and promoting a lie ; nay, worse than a lie ; a scheme of tolerating iniquity by making it consistent with salvation : it places the mediator of the new covenant in the rank of an impostor, and a slanderer, who bends his laws to suit the prejudices of the world, and condemns vice in others, only to indulge it in his followers. In the name of your best friend, let not so heavy a charge lie at your door ; wipe off so foul a dishonour from the christian name, and let not these things be once named among you.

Let me not be mistaken ; it is not a just conclusion, that because a man's life is bad, his principles must necessarily be false. The truth of Christianity, unshaken by human passions, will remain the same whether its advocates adorn it or no ; for it is built not on the wisdom of men, but the power of God. But this is an inference which the world will draw.

They

They judge of men's sentiments by their actions, and as they construe misfortunes into judgments, so they resolve wicked practices into wrong notions. There are but few who are judges of just reasoning, but all feel the force of a virtuous example. There is something peculiarly eloquent and convincing in an upright and blameless conversation, which will wear away the most inveterate prejudices, and bring over an adversary better than the most animated declamation.

The fortitude and resignation of the primitive Christians under persecution; the sobriety, charity, and goodness for which they were so universally celebrated, supplied the place of miracles to the unbelieving Gentiles; and had it not been for that exalted pitch of virtue by which they were superior to the rest of mankind, their religion would never have drawn attention; it might perhaps have been tolerated by the complaisance of the Heathens, but must at last inevitably have sunk into oblivion.

In this case a modest unbeliever of ancient days would naturally have said,
“Will you persuade me that your Master was more divine than Socrates or
Plato,

Plato, while his religion does not make you more conscientious, just, devout, and benevolent, better members of society, better men; either you do not believe what you pretend, or what you believe is nothing but an empty speculation; and let your witnesses be ever so numerous, your evidences ever so strong, you may gain my assent by your arguments to-day, and to-morrow by your lives you will make me an infidel again."

But to make the best use of the foregoing observations, let us remember, that if the practice of iniquity tends to injure the name and character of our Lord; by abstaining from it we shall recommend his cause, and advance his glory; by adorning the Gospel of our Saviour, we hold it out as an object of admiration and excellence that cannot be resisted; by displaying, through a pure conversation, the peace and charity it inspires, we shew that its genuine fruits are righteousness, happiness, and assurance for ever; we ensure its success, and silence all its adversaries. Under these auspicious effects, it will recover its wonted glory; it will go forth conquering and to conquer; it will lead sin and superstition

tion captive; it will be continually adding to its laurels and its victories, till it has gained a complete triumph over the passions and prejudices of men, and bowed the world to its generous dominion. Who would not contribute to the advancement of so good a cause? Who would not wish to be an instrument in so glorious a design, and lend his hand and his heart to build up the church of Christ, to bring so much honour to God, and so much happiness to his fellow-creatures? I see the emulation that is kindling in your breasts; I hear the noble resolutions you are forming; I pray God to increase them, and I wish you prosperity in the name of the Lord. Thus you will shew yourselves to be sincere friends, true believers, faithful disciples; and your service will not be forgotten, when your "Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

By the ties and obligations therefore of our common Christianity, I beseech you to remember "the vows of God which are upon you." Consider what you owe to him "who bore the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest "you should be weary and faint in your
"minds."

“minds.” As you would be true to your trust, as you would be consistent in your profession, as you would be faithful to your rank, station, and name; as you would maintain your character in the world, be mindful of that superior relation in which you stand as Christians; as you are distinguished by the noblest name among men, preserve its dignity, “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called”; as you wish well to the Gospel of Christ, do not sully it by an inconsistent conduct; do not expose it to the derision of fools and libertines; exert all your efforts, and leave the rest to God. Consecrate the small remnant of your lives to him who gave them, to him who redeemed them; so shall you acquit yourselves with honour, and whatever becomes of the world, you shall be received into everlasting mansions.

S E R M O N XV.

VIRTUOUS CHILDREN THE JOY OF
THEIR PARENTS;

A SERMON TO YOUNG PEOPLE,
FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY.

PROVERBS X. I.

*A wise son maketh a glad father; but a
foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.*

IT is natural to imagine, that mankind
would need no other inducement to
be good and virtuous, than the prospect
of future happiness; and that the hope
of eternal glory would be the strongest
VOL. IX. O motive

motive to a life of piety, that could possibly be suggested. But such is the weakness of human nature, that distant consequences, however great and important, have but a faint and short-liv'd effect upon our minds; whilst the view of obtaining present pleasure, or the fear of falling into immediate misery, makes a deep and strong impression on our hearts. With a few persons, indeed, of a contemplative turn of mind, the expectation of future felicity, and the dread of future punishment, may have their proper and most desirable effects; but the generality of mankind are much more affected with present things, with what they can see, and feel, and experience, than by any distant hopes and fears, and are much more powerfully influenced by them in favour of religion.

The argument which Solomon makes use of in the text, has this advantage. He recommends wisdom and piety to youth, by telling them, that the happiness of parents greatly depends upon the good behaviour of their children; that it lies in their power, either by a wise and prudent conduct to make the lives of those who were the means of bringing them

them into the world easy and comfortable, or by a foolish and vicious behaviour, to fill their declining years with sorrow and distress. "A wise son maketh
"a glad father, but a foolish son is the
"heaviness of his mother."

As these words immediately respect young persons, I may surely venture to hope, that you who are in the early part of life; you, particularly, who still enjoy the blessing of good parents, will hear me with attention, and with some degree of advantage, whilst I endeavour to illustrate the sentiment contained in the text, and to shew what foundation parents have to rejoice in the virtuous behaviour of their children.

In the first place, I observe, that such parents have the greatest reason to rejoice on their own account. For if there be any thing in this world, which can fill their hearts with joy and satisfaction; surely it will inspire them with the truest delight to find, by happy experience, that the good instructions bestowed upon their children, were not bestowed in vain; that they had not forgotten those lessons of piety, of temperance, of humility, and benevolence, which it was their pleasing
O 2 employ-

employment to teach them in early life; but that they have treasured them up in their hearts, and made them the rule of their actions. What exquisite pleasure must perpetually flow in upon the hearts of virtuous parents, when they find, that their good example has not been ineffectual; that it was not in vain that they abstained from the criminal pursuits of sense; that it was not in vain that they were careful to live sober, righteous, and godly lives; but that their children, charmed with the many good qualities which appeared throughout the whole of their conduct, were happily led to imitate their virtues, and to tread in the same paths of integrity and piety, in which they themselves have constantly persevered!

It must likewise give them a very high degree of satisfaction to reflect, that they will derive honour from the virtue of their offspring; that thus, when they are laid in the grave, they will be remembered with double respect, not only as having supported amiable and worthy characters themselves, but as being the parents of children who are blessings

to society, and ornaments to their religious profession.

Nor let it be forgotten, that the parents of virtuous children have abundant reason to rejoice in the security which they have from the amiable character of their offspring, that they shall not be destitute of support and comfort in old age. They may console themselves with this pleasing reflection, that, should adversity overtake them in their declining years, they have children who will think it their indispensable duty to afford them any assistance which lies in their power; chearfully to administer to all their wants; to attend upon them in the hour of sickness with the most tender sollicitude; and, in short, to do every thing in their power to make the winter of their lives comfortable and happy.

But what cannot fail to inspire such parents with the truest pleasure, is, that when at the throne of their supreme judge they are called upon to give an account of their past life, and of the manner in which they have discharged every social and relative duty, their children will then rise up as living witnesses to their love for

virtue, and to their zeal for the interest of religion.

Virtuous parents have still another foundation for joy and satisfaction in the prudent behaviour of their children, which ought by no means to be omitted, and that is, that they can entertain themselves with the pleasing hopes of meeting them again beyond the grave, and of being for ever happy with them in the kingdom of heaven. In these various instances the parents of a virtuous offspring have the greatest reason to rejoice on their own account.

But, on the other hand, what deep sorrow, what inexpressible distress must those persons continually feel, whose wretched lot it is to be the parents of vicious and disobedient children ! If complete misery is to be found on earth, with them surely we may expect to find it. Figure to yourselves, my young friends, a venerable old man, who has passed through the flower and prime of life with credit and respect ; whose highest ambition it was to make his children good and pious ; who took every opportunity, both by precept and by example, to inspire them with a love of virtue ; who was infinitely

finitely more assiduous to make them wise and prudent than rich and powerful, and who had often flattered himself with the fond expectation, that in future time they would prove an ornament to religion, a blessing to the community, and the pride of his gray hairs. Imagine his children proving refractory, licentious, and prophane; his good instructions all thrown away; his worthy example neglected, despised, and ridiculed. Imagine all his pleasing expectations of comfort and support in the decline of life, utterly disappointed; no prospect that his offspring will ever prove an honour to him, either in this world or in the next, nor a single hope remaining, that he shall ever meet them in the blessed abodes of heaven. Figure to yourselves the situation of such a father, and then say, if it be possible for imagination to form an idea of a situation more truly afflicting, more truly to be pitied. If in that state of torment, with which the wicked are so often threatened in the sacred Scriptures, there be any kind of punishment fraught with peculiar horror and anguish; surely it will be the portion of that ungrateful wretch, who has been the means

of bringing down such a load of complicated misery upon an aged and virtuous parent.

But let us now return to the more agreeable part of our subject. And here I observe, farther, that the parents of wise and prudent children have reason to rejoice, not only on their own account, but also on account of their offspring. For if they are not totally divested of natural affection, it must surely give them the highest satisfaction to find, that those for whom they are so nearly concerned, have escaped the snares and temptations of the world, and have preserved their virtue untainted, amidst all the allurements of vice; that they have resisted the impetuosity of their youthful passions, and have set out in life under the direction of honest principles. What a lively pleasure must that parent feel, who is at all interested in the welfare of his children, when he finds their reputation every day rising in the world; when he sees them conducting their affairs with prudence and discretion, and bidding fair for prosperity and success! Nay, should even adversity befall them, and Providence think fit to surround them with difficulties

ties and hardships; it must nevertheless afford the heart of a good parent a great degree of pleasure, to find his children happy in virtue, if not in riches; to see them passing through life with innocence, if not with worldly grandeur, and to observe them preparing themselves, by a course of strict integrity, for immortal happiness.

On the other hand, what cutting anguish must that unhappy parent feel, who sees his child—perhaps his only child—a child of whom he had formed the warmest expectations which the fond heart of a parent could entertain, fallen a sacrifice to the snares of temptation; a slave to every lawless passion; destitute of every worthy principle; lost to all sense of shame; his hopes of future happiness, and even of success in his temporal concerns, blasted by indolence and licentiousness! No one can conceive how exquisitely severe this species of distress is, but those who have unfortunately felt it.

But parents have another foundation for joy and satisfaction in the virtuous behaviour of their children. They may rejoice on account of their family.

They may congratulate themselves, that the honour of it will be supported;—that those who are hereafter to fill up their stations in life, are likely to supply their places with credit and reputation, and to reflect increasing honour on their ancestors. The heart of a virtuous parent must surely be filled with exquisite delight, when in imagination he looks forward into futurity, and sees those virtues which have always distinguished his family, handed down, with undiminished lustre, to the latest posterity. To such a father, how pleasing is it to observe his elder children making it their endeavour to set a good example to the younger; to see them enforcing the admonitions of their parents, with all the tenderness of brotherly love! What solid satisfaction must it afford him, to see his offspring increasing in mutual esteem; to see the bands of harmony continually strengthening; to observe them every day still more and more attaching themselves to each other, by a thousand reciprocal offices of tenderness and affection! But, with what heart-felt joy and comfort must it inspire him, to reflect, that when it is out of his power to afford his offspring

spring any further assistance, they will be mutual supports to one another;—that they will minister to each others necessities, and share each others sorrows!

On the contrary, what deep affliction are those wretched parents doomed to endure, whose children prove the reverse of what they could have wished, and of what they had reason to expect! There are few persons but what have a partial regard for the credit of that particular family to which they belong, and some ambition to see it honoured and respected in the world. Judge then, what painful concern that man must feel, who finds himself the father of a child, who is likely to prove a disgrace to his name, and reproach to his family. How must it distress him, to behold his elder children setting before their younger brethren a perpetual example of folly and profligacy; to observe them taking every method to corrupt their minds, and to make them as ungrateful and as disobedient as themselves! How must it grieve a virtuous parent, to see his children involved in perpetual strife and discord; to see them unkindly aggravating each other's faults, and taking every opportunity to vent

their unnatural malice against each other! Surely, if there be any one unfortunate circumstance, which is alone sufficient to make life an intolerable burden, it is this, to be the father of perverse, disobedient, and vicious children.

But, lastly, the parents of a wise and prudent offspring have yet another foundation for joy and satisfaction. Having been themselves zealous in supporting the honour, and in promoting the interest of religion, it will be a source of real pleasure to them, to see their rising generation inspired with the same commendable zeal. It is to them a source of inexpressible felicity, to see their children disposed to do honour to that holy religion which they profess, by habits of piety and untainted virtue, by a blameless conversation, and by a worthy example.

With these pleasing prospects, the virtuous parent thinks himself well repaid, for all the care, for all the tenderness, for all the anxious solicitude which he bestowed upon his children. In all the events of life, their prudent behaviour is his joy and consolation:—in prosperity it is his pride;—in adversity, his support. And at that season, when the last moments

ments of life are hastening on ; when nature, wearied out with infirmity and old age, seeks repose in death ; he can take a chearful, though an affecting farewell of his children. Imagine him lying on his last bed of sickness. Imagine his children assembled around him ;— the deepest—the tenderest concern painted on every countenance ;—imagine him addressing them in words like these :

“ I feel, my children, that the hand
“ of death is upon me. I feel, that this
“ earthly tabernacle must shortly be dissolved. Thanks to the Father of
“ Mercies, who hath preserved my life
“ thus long, and blessed it with so many
“ enjoyments. You, my children, I
“ have always had reason to esteem as
“ my highest comforts. Your growing
“ virtues have been the joy of my gray
“ hairs ; your piety has been the glory
“ of my old age ; your filial tenderness
“ has been the support of my declining
“ years. May Heaven bless you in your
“ children, as I am blest in mine. Weep
“ not that I am now to be separated
“ from you :—death is a debt which all
“ must pay. My days of usefulness are
“ past :—your society would be the only
“ plea-

“pleasure I now could possibly enjoy;
“and that is a pleasure which I have the
“highest reason to hope I shall for ever
“enjoy, in a world much superior to the
“present. My last and most earnest
“request is, that you would endeavour
“to maintain the honour of our family,
“by transmitting to posterity these lessons
“of piety to God, and good-will to men,
“which you have received from me. I
“now recommend you to the care of a
“kind Providence. Repose in him your
“entire trust and confidence; he will
“guide you safely through life, and at
“last conduct you to immortal happiness.”

Thus have I endeavoured to describe the pleasure which every good parent receives from the wise and prudent behaviour of his children.

What has now been said cannot but convince you, my young friends, that the happiness of your parents is greatly in your power;—that “a wise son maketh a glad father,” and that “a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.” Let me then intreat you to shew by your actions, that you have some regard for the peace and comfort of those who brought you.

you into the world; that you are not equally destitute of gratitude and natural affection. Consider what they have done and suffered for you; with what tenderness they watched over you in the helpless age of infancy; with what care they supplied your wants, and defended you from danger, when you were feeble, indigent, and helpless. In the petulant age of childhood, consider how carefully they checked the progress of every improper passion; with what gentleness they corrected your faults; with what patience they bore your peevishness and ill-temper. In youth, remember what pains they took to give your hearts the strongest impressions in favour of virtue; to defend you from the assaults of temptation; to store your minds with all valuable knowledge; and to prepare you for honour and usefulness in the world. Consider, how many gratifications they have denied themselves for your sakes; how many anxious hours they have devoted to your service, which might otherwise have been spent in pleasure and amusement.

Let me then ask you, in what manner you think you ought to act towards persons

sons to whom you are so highly indebted? Is it a proper return for all their care, their tenderness, and solicitude, to despise their instructions, to disobey their commands, and to bring dishonour and misery upon them, by a course of vice and debauchery? I hope there is no young person to whom I now address myself, that has not something within his breast which tells him, that such a conduct is detestably base, and ungenerous.

But let it be observed, that not only your gratitude but your interest is concerned in your dutiful behaviour to your parents. When they are laid in the grave, consider what comfort it will afford you to be able to reflect, that you paid them all the filial honour which lay in your power; that you returned their offices of tenderness and affection in the best manner you could, and strove to make the evening of their lives serene and happy.

If you thus discharge your duty to your parents, you may hope, that you also in time may enjoy the blessing of wise and obedient children; that you may be the parents of a pious offspring, who in their turn will make you happy
in

in the prospect of their rising virtues; who will cheer you in old age, and be to you a crown of immortal honour.

Let these reflections, my young friends, sink deep into your hearts. Never forget, what pleasure it affords your parents to see you pursuing the paths of prudence and integrity; and be always generously solicitous to make them as happy as you can, by a wise and virtuous behaviour.

“Honour thy father with thy whole
“heart, and forget not the sorrows of thy
“mother: how canst thou recompense
“the things which they have done for
“thee?”

T H E E N D.

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